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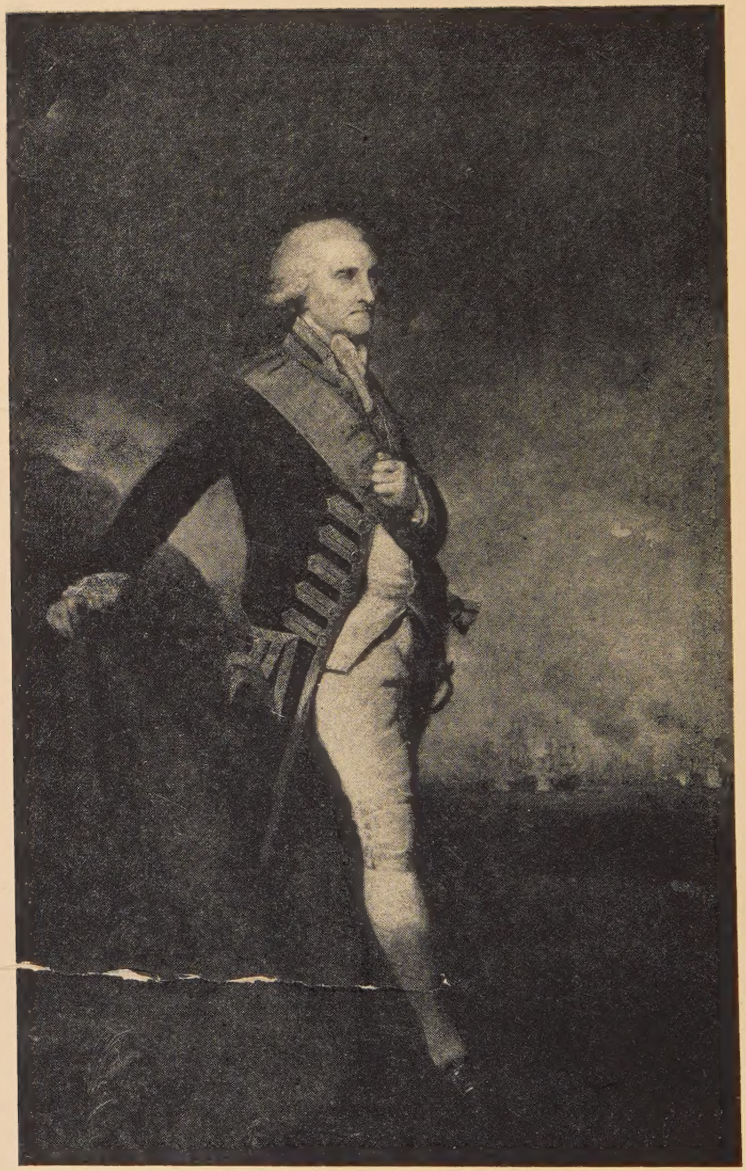
FLIGHTS OF NAVAL GENIUS



GEORGE BRYDGES BARON RODNEY

From the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds in St. James' Palace.
By gracious permission of His Majesty the King.

Frontispiece.

FLIGHTS OF NAVAL GENIUS

by
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PREFACE

GENIUS has been defined 'as achieving its results by instinctive perception and spontaneous activity, rather than by processes which admit of being distinctly analysed.'

The five men whose activities form the subject of this book all possessed one quality in common, the capacity for assuming responsibility on a great scale and in a striking manner. In the case of four of them this capacity was occasionally displayed in such unaccountable form, and with such brilliant results, that it amounted to genius of the highest order.

Howe at the time of the Mutinies was a feeble invalid, racked with gout, whose venerable appearance and sentimental urbanity had much to do with saving a desperate situation which was largely the result of his own incompetence. But at the same time, his treatment of the mutineers, judged by the standards of the day, was an act of genius in the sphere of civil statesmanship. He bowed to the inevitable, but his bow produced triumphant harmony where only sullen acquiescence was expected.

Rodney's decision to break the French line at the battle of the Saints was an act of genius in naval leadership born of the 'instinctive perception and spontaneous activity' of a bold and experienced commander. In other respects there was much in Rodney of the gouty tyrant, but in observing his capricious fanaticism and dejected vacillations we must not fail to see the elements of genius thwarted by physical and mental decay.

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Sir Sidney Smith has always been credited with possessing certain talents, but he has seldom received more than the grudging recognition usually accorded to a successful mountebank. By an obscure and singularly British convention, flamboyant eccentricity is positively demanded from men like Byron, Tolstoy and Wagner, while condemned in naval officers. Men of genius, ashore, are expected to dress extraordinarily, to create scenes in public and to ill-treat their wives, but naval officers who achieve exceptional results by exceptional means, even when their family life is exemplary, are looked on with grave suspicion, unless they happen to be named Horatio Nelson.

Smith's organisation of the defence of Acre was no mere piece of bluff and luck, and, whatever we may think of his sponsorship of the Convention of El Arish, it is difficult to deny that his whole conduct in the Levant was marked by genius of an extraordinary kind.

It is not suggested that his cousin, Lord Camelford, was in any sense a genius, but his career is of exceptional interest, because it shows how easily certain elements of genius may run riot and turn to mania, even in the man of action.

Sir Charles Napier repeated Smith's career under somewhat different conditions. He was not so strikingly successful in his exploits, and he failed to avoid the lure of politics, but he possessed a genius for leadership, which in the days of slow communication he displayed with profound disregard for the man not on the spot.

The years covered by the activities of these five men are from the middle of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth centuries, the last and greatest period of the sailing ship. There is little else wherewith to connect them, and they have been purposely chosen to show the diversity and many-sidedness of the British genius at sea.

If I have laid special emphasis on certain similar features in their lives, it is because these features seem to me to have formed the chief environment in which their lives were set. To-day it is assumed without question that complete physical fitness should be a primary test for command, and that officers on the active list should not participate in politics ; but to Rodney gout was inevitable and a seat in Parliament essential. In Rodney's day ships were commanded by favoured youths and fleets by senile veterans. Drunkenness and disease were rife, producing that tendency to quarrelsome disputatiousness which so often led to duels in the morning. One genius was able to remedy the mistakes of a host of physical and mental incompetents. To-day, steam, wireless and aircraft have severely limited the initiative of the man on the spot, while we are given to understand that there are fewer incompetents. Rodney's treatment of his officers is no longer necessary, and Napier's convention with Mehemet Ali is no longer possible. The genius of to-day has more varied means at his disposal, but his opportunities for using them are more limited.

W. C. B. T.

Royal Naval College,
Greenwich,
Nov., 1929.

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HOWE

HOWE AND THE MUTINY

I

ON the 6th March, 1797, an oldish man was sitting in a quietly furnished reception-room in Bath, preparatory to making his daily excursion to take the waters, when a servant entered with a letter. The old man looked at his name on the outside for some time and then opened and read it. After that he went to a bureau and brought out several more letters, nearly a dozen in all, and, having put the latest arrival at the head of the pile, he examined its handwriting very carefully.

The letters were all unsigned and came from various ships at Portsmouth, and were in the form of petitions addressed to Lord Howe, humbly entreating him, with the greatest respect, to assist the seamen to obtain a speedy increase in their wages. The latest arrival was almost identical in form with the rest, and, though the handwriting differed slightly, the only real difference between them was that they all purported to come from different ships. After some consideration Lord Howe put the whole collection back in the bureau and went off, looking slightly puzzled, to take the waters at the Pump Room, where he received the congratulations of many persons of quality on the occasion of his seventy-first birthday.

Richard Howe was certainly a man to be noted and admired wherever he went in public, both for his reputation and appearance. His name had been a household word in England for over thirty years, and his naval

services dated from long before that. Captain Howe at Rochefort, at St. Cas and in Quiberon Bay had been a notable figure in the Seven Years' War, and Admiral Howe, the foiler of d'Estaing, inventor of new signals and tactics, reliever of Gibraltar, First Lord of the Admiralty, and victor on the Glorious First of June was now the greatest man in the sea service. Moreover, he was the 'Sailors' Friend.' After an action he never failed to visit the wounded and talk to them in a genial, fatherly manner, and invariably assigned them wine and fresh meat from his own private store, while, as captain of the *Magnanime*, he had risked desertions and a court-martial on himself by giving the entire ship's company a fortnight's leave by watches, after the battle of Quiberon Bay. In face he was heavy and menacing, with a thick nose, broad mouth and prominent lips, and was generally known as 'Black Dick.' He had been forced by ill-health to come to Bath while still nominally in command of the Channel Fleet, the actual direction of it being in the hands of Alexander Hood, Lord Bridport.

Thus, when the seamen wanted more pay they sent their petitions to Howe at Bath, who, being racked with gout, and only just able to hobble on crutches, put the worst possible construction on them, and decided that they had all been 'fabricated by some malicious individual who meant to insinuate the presence of a general discontent in the fleet.' Feeling unable, in any case, to answer such anonymous letters, he wrote to Rear-Admiral Lord Hugh Seymour, at Portsmouth, and asked him to make various enquiries.

A fortnight afterwards, Howe travelled up to London and delivered the bundle of petitions, with some more recent additions, to the Admiralty. Lord Spencer, the First Lord, has long been recognised as a great public

servant, but it is no exaggeration to say that until the Mutiny took place he had very little idea of the life and problems of the ordinary seaman. Nor was he properly informed by his Sea Lords, who until the crisis came kept him in a state of repressive ignorance. For this there was no excuse, since a group of anonymous petitions, similar to those sent to Howe, had already arrived at the Admiralty, together with a confidential letter of warning from Captain Thomas Pakenham, to which Spencer urged in reply 'the propriety of not allowing' the pay question 'to be agitated on any account whatever.'

The request put forward by the seamen with so much caution, hesitation and deference, was one for which an overwhelming case could easily be made out. Briefly, the Government of Charles II had fixed the rates of pay at 19*s.* a month for ordinary seamen, and 22*s.* 6*d.* for able seamen, and these rates had not been altered since. Thus it is hardly to be wondered at that, with the rise in the cost of living, accompanied by the steady increase of pay in every other branch of the service, the seamen should feel themselves treated with great injustice. Moreover, half-pay and pensions were steadily making their way through the service from the ranks of the admirals downwards, while the seamen could only claim the meagre benefits conferred by Greenwich Hospital.

It is clear, however, that, although the question of pay was the only one raised by the seamen in the first instance, the cause of their final defiance of the Government in open, organised mutiny was due to the existence of a whole mass of additional grievances. Quite apart from any details of wages, victuals and discipline, there arises the fundamental question of why and how the seamen were ever persuaded to fight at all, seeing that in the

eighteenth century their occupation was one of the most dangerous, unsavoury and least remunerative that existed.

The answer seems to be that they were convinced by crude propaganda that the enemy of the moment were eagerly desirous of murdering their families and burning their homes, and that the best means of preventing this was to go and sink a few of the enemy's ships or capture some of their islands in the West Indies. That is to say, they were definitely used by the governing classes to found an empire of whose fruits they might have little share and of whose destiny, mission and responsibilities they had not the slightest inkling. In general they were tough men, who knew no better lot, who welcomed a fight, though bearing the ordinary irksomeness of service with patience and cheerfulness. If asked for what cause they fought, they would have answered 'England,' even if it only meant a hovel. Some volunteered and received an outrageously large bounty of ready money, tempting and easily spent, while others, in the midst of well-paid life in a merchant ship or ordinary work ashore, succumbed to the formidable methods of the press-gang.

Once on board a man-of-war, the seaman discovered a terrible life, experiencing, as Doctor Johnson remarked, all the restrictions of a prison with, in addition, the chance of being drowned. The ships, often built of improperly seasoned timber, were damp and full of rot, while the bilge-water stank horribly. In anything like bad weather the ship had to be battened down completely, so that for weeks on end the seaman existed amidst damp and rot without ventilation or change of clothes. But of this he never complained, for all ships were more or less the same, and their condition was taken as a matter of course.

But of other grievances, considered as open to remedy,

the seaman spoke with no uncertain voice. Not only had his pay remained the same since the time of Charles II, but a special increase had just been awarded to all lieutenants ; and the captains of the North Sea Fleet at the Nore were at that moment discussing the advisability of asking the Admiralty for a rise. The Army and the Militia, too, had lately received increases. The East and West Indian merchants were comparatively open-handed in their treatment of the men serving in the tea and sugar ships, while large sums were earned for minute services in privateers. Yet even these facts would have been less emphasised if only the seaman had received his wretched pittance at regular intervals and in cash. On the contrary, he was only paid half-yearly, and even then with a ticket which had to be presented at a pay office, situated in England, before cash could be obtained. Moreover, there were so many ways in which even the sum promised on the ticket might be forfeited, that the seaman was lucky if he ever got his ticket at all. For instance, if his ship was wrecked while on a foreign station, or if he was quickly drafted to a new ship for some other reason, the purser of his original ship might be unable or unwilling to supply it, while his new purser would only credit him with pay from the date of his joining the new ship. Finally, pay was stopped during all time spent in the sick-bay or hospital ashore, either on account of wounds or sickness occasioned by service conditions.

The seamen never received leave, even when in home ports, else they would have deserted wholesale, and therefore they had no hope of a paying-off which would enable them to cash their tickets until the war itself should end. In 1797 this event seemed hopelessly far off, and the only means of obtaining ready cash was to sell the tickets to Jews, touts and bumboat women, at a

ruinous discount. The seaman was, of course, at liberty to send his ticket to his family by post, and many did so, or there would have been more distress in England than there was, but, in any case, the whole business was iniquitous.

Much could have been done to mitigate these evils by the issue of plenty of wholesome food and drink; but the quality and quantity of naval victuals were already proverbial, and had been a standing grievance for centuries. The biscuits were hard and weevily, and partly compounded of old bones. The beef and pork were generally foul when opened up, because the semi-putrid surplus provisions brought back by other ships had always to be eaten first, by which time the new provisions, which might have been good when originally issued, had already had time to decay. In the same way, the water was not generally tapped until the beer was finished, by which time it was green and slimy. Lime-juice, though already known as an antidote to the inevitable scurvy, was seldom issued; and it was left for the seamen themselves to demand fresh vegetables while in home ports, in defiance of doctors, admirals and politicians.

Most ships went to sea grossly under-victualled, so that after a few weeks messes of six had to be content with the rations of four, and consequently no scales of diet are in the least reliable for judging the existing conditions. Finally, to complete the full tale of inhumanity, the pursers frequently assumed that only fourteen ounces went to the pound, and sold off the difference to their own profit. Thus the economic position of the seaman was about as bad as it could possibly be, and writers who have wasted their energy in speculative outbursts about the industrial revolution, might well study

the great body of solid facts which surround the work of the reformers from Admiral Vernon to Samuel Plimsoll and Havelock Wilson.

The reader might well ask, why did the seamen endure these horrors so long? And the answer is that they would willingly have endured them longer yet, if only they could have been assured of the co-operation of their officers in working for their gradual betterment. Most writers who have touched the subject of the great mutinies, however superficially, have never failed to note that the harsh and capricious system of discipline was one of the seamen's greatest grievances, and it is no exaggeration to say that, but for the combination of stupidity, brutality and slackness amongst the officers, the mutinies would never have happened at all. Stupidity must come first, for it was precisely that lack of understanding born of the arrogance and ignorance of the age which forced the seamen to demand their rights with their own mouths, since their officers could not and would not do it for them. It is untrue to say that the Navy was governed by politicians, ignorant of the feelings of all ranks. On the contrary, during the last hundred years before the mutinies a distinguished sailor had been at the head of the Admiralty during fifty-three of them, while the remaining naval members of the Board had all been men capable of understanding and advocating the cause of the seamen. They did nothing, however, because they deemed that nothing could or ought to be done.

Admittedly the times were tough, and the seamen were what are transatlantically known as a 'hard-boiled crowd,' but they were always quick to obey when obedience meant service efficiency. What they loathed above all were the opposite vices of brutality and slackness.

Brutal captains had their men flogged with dozens of blows from ' cats ' with nine separate ' tails ' of rope for the most trivial and unavoidable shortcomings in the daily routine. Slack captains, on the other hand, allowed their lieutenants and petty officers to exercise a delegated and competitive tyranny, the boatswain's mates driving the men all over the ship with ' starters ' of hard knotted rope. In slack ships, too, the willing men caught it worst, the shirkers being able in the general confusion to escape both work and punishment. Officers seldom knew many of their men by name, and substituted cascades of stentorian and genealogical abuse for properly phrased commands.

Strict officers, however, like St. Vincent, provided they were fair and efficient, were always willingly obeyed, the sailors preferring a tight hand who would keep his lieutenants in check, enforce some elementary rules of hygiene and make the ship sail and fight well, with the chance of a safe return and some prize money.

It must not be supposed, however, that in 1797 conditions were worse than they had been during the last thirty years : on the contrary, men like Vernon, Hawke, Kempenfelt and Howe had all used their influence, though timidly, in favour of a more humane and intelligent system, with the result that conditions had been vastly improved since the time of Smollett.

Why, then, did the seamen mutiny on such a grand scale in that year ?

The reason was that two new but interdependent factors had entered the situation. Firstly the world-wide demands of the war led the Government to go outside the ordinary press-gang areas for men, and so introduced into the Navy a new type of seaman, who, being unaccustomed to sea and seaport life, realised the nastiness of

the conditions and kicked. Secondly, the ideas of the French Revolution offered a definite political and philosophical setting for what had before been but seamen's 'grouses,' and, with the war apparently stretching out into an endless future, and no hope of leave or ready money, they were emboldened to take a short cut to 'Liberty.'

Naturally enough, it was the men from inland who had in them the bulk of the revolutionary ideas, and it was they who saw the horrors of naval life in all its new and sudden ghastliness. Among these, too, were those with most education, lawyers' clerks, business failures and men of intelligence imprisoned for petty crimes. Nevertheless, the seamen proper had such a contempt for these dregs, as they considered them, who were only fit to serve in the waist of the ship or act as swabbers, sweepers and sanitary men, that throughout the mutiny at Portsmouth it was the able seamen and not the waisters who controlled it, and saw that it was run on strictly seamanlike lines.

It is easy to understand, therefore, why the seamen in the first instance sent their petitions to Howe and not to Bridport, who was only acting commander-in-chief, and who, without being the least tyrannical, had no particular reputation for understanding or humanity.

II

The Admiralty had been thoroughly warned both by the petitions sent to them direct and by those sent to Howe, and, though the crews at Portsmouth maintained perfect discipline up till the very last moment, every officer in the Channel Fleet must have been aware that something was afoot. Nevertheless, not a single person

in authority made the slightest attempt to forestall the outbreak by calling representatives of the seamen to a conference, or even by advising such a course.[1]

Meanwhile, the fleet returned to Portsmouth on 30th March, and the seamen crowded round the leading spirits to know if there had been any answer to their petitions. But there was not a single answer from Howe or the Admiralty to any of the ships, nor was this likely, seeing that all the letters had been anonymous. Still, they hoped that in the next few days some acknowledgment would appear in general orders.

They waited a fortnight, obediently and respectfully, but nothing happened, and then they made ready to act. Everywhere in the fleet men could be seen with their heads together in eager groups, and, as boats with orders and provisions passed from ship to ship, secret messages were quickly circulated. On 13th April Lord Bridport informed the Admiralty of 'disagreeable combinations,' and next day Sir Peter Parker, the port admiral, wrote definitely that Tuesday, 18th April, was the day fixed for the outbreak. The Admiralty, worried but 'firm,' ordered Bridport to send Rear-Admiral Sir Alan Gardner in the *Royal Sovereign*, with seven others of the biggest ships, across to St. Helens, and to be ready at any moment to put to sea with the remainder. Bridport warned them that 'serious consequences' would ensue if the fleet was ordered to sea 'before some answer is given to these petitions.' He saw the danger too late, and, though he suggested the only possible course, his masters were obdurate and

[1] For the account of the events which follow I am deeply indebted to Professor Conrad Gill's *Naval Mutinies of* 1797. This admirable monograph is the only modern work dealing extensively with a subject so strangely neglected by our social and economic historians.

ordered the fleet to sail. Apparently Bridport ignored this order, and contented himself with trying to get Gardner's squadron to St. Helens, but it was useless, for 16th April, when Gardner gave the order, was Easter Sunday, and the seamen were eagerly making use of their immemorial Sunday privilege of visiting each other's ships. Petitions were being drawn up throughout the fleet, and were being circulated for signature by delegates from every ship. Gardner's men refused to obey; and the ringleaders in the other ships, seeing what was happening, decided to start the mutiny at once without waiting till Tuesday or for the petitions to be completed.

Boats put out from the *Queen Charlotte*, Howe's flagship, and from Bridport's *Royal George*, and, boarding each ship in turn, asked the crews to elect two delegates to meet that night in the *Queen Charlotte*. Bridport, now that the crisis had come, acted with considerable tact; he ordered captains not to interfere with the election of delegates, but to collect statements of grievances from their crews, and again represented to the Admiralty the wisdom of 'complying in some measure with the prayer of the petitions.'

His previous letter was now answered by a repetition of the order to sail and the following communication for the seamen:

> The application has been communicated to their Lordships, and the subject will have that serious consideration which its importance requires.

Could departmental vacuity go further? On Easter Monday the rule of the delegates began. No attempt was made to supersede the authority of the officers, the usual routine of ships in port being quietly and efficiently carried out, but nothing would induce the men to touch the anchors.

The delegates named themselves the 'General Assembly,' and had their headquarters in Howe's vacated cabin in the *Queen Charlotte*. An oath of fidelity was demanded from all the seamen, officers were treated with obedience and respect, and two ships intended to protect a convoy of merchantmen to Newfoundland were ordered to sail at once, lest the mutineers should be charged with damaging trade. Certain officers were told that boats would attend to take them ashore, and these individuals found it advisable to leave, but in other respects ordinary discipline was maintained, while reeved ropes trailing from the yard-arms reminded potential Jacobins that this was a mutiny and not a revolution.

The next step came from London, where the Admiralty, at last apprised of the real conditions by Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Pole, Captain of the Fleet, announced their intention of coming at once to Portsmouth. On 18th April, therefore, Lord Spencer, Lord Arden, Rear-Admiral Young and William Marsden, the second secretary, arrived with ready-made proposals, and were soon closeted with Bridport and his senior officers. Lord Arden was a lawyer, Young had a good service reputation and Marsden was by taste a savant. Finally, the representatives of the Board decided to tell the seamen that they would advise the King to recommend to Parliament that the able seamen should receive an increase of three to four shillings a month, the ordinary seamen three shillings and the landsmen two shillings. In addition, all seamen should receive full pay while sick or wounded, and a pension or berth in Greenwich Hospital if finally declared unfit for further service. This offer was put in the form of an order to Bridport, and Vice-Admiral Sir John Colpoys, Sir Alan Gardner

and Sir Charles Pole were entrusted with conveying it to the *Queen Charlotte*.

The General Assembly read the offer and did not like it, but promised to give an answer next day. The admirals returned crestfallen, and the General Assembly continued undisturbed in the great cabin of the *Queen Charlotte*. All was quiet in the fleet, the only sign of mutiny being that at 8 a.m. and sunset the crews manned the yards and cheered.

Late next day the General Assembly totally rejected the Admiralty's offer. They demanded 28*s*. a month for able seamen and 23*s*. 6*d*. a month for ordinary seamen—that is to say, an increase of 5*s*. 6*d*. and 4*s*. 6*d*. respectively, instead of 4*s*. and 3*s*. offered by the Admiralty. Moreover, they refused to recognise the Admiralty's distinction between ordinary seamen and landsmen, claiming that they should be classed together as ordinary seamen. They also demanded that in future sixteen ounces should go to the pound, that they should be supplied with fresh vegetables in home ports, and that Greenwich Hospital out-pensions should be raised from seven to ten pounds. Finally, to include all branches in the scheme, the marines must have their wages increased.

Of these demands, by far the most interesting was that which aimed at abolishing the distinction between ordinary seamen and landsmen.

Men were obtained for the Navy in three ways. A few volunteered, and received a bounty or lump sum in cash as a reward, which, as previously mentioned, was an illusory benefit. The second and largest group were brought in by the press-gang, operating at sea and in seaport towns. The custom was to intercept returning merchant ships and take their best men, a cruel practice,

since unfortunates were seized after completing a lengthy trip to China and back within sight of their own homes. Ashore the press-gang ravaged the low quarters of the town for men, and, on the alarm being given, such as could fled, and camped in the country round. Others, however, were caught in taverns and bawdy houses temporarily incapacitated from flight—hence the mob of viragos invariably depicted assaulting the press-gang in contemporary pictures. Most of these men might be expected to have some knowledge of sea-life, and could therefore be classed as ordinary seamen. But when the Government directed the mayors and sheriffs of inland areas to empty the local gaols into the sea, the products could only be classed as landsmen. As such, they were stationed in the waist or below-decks, and hauled on ropes and performed various menial functions previously alluded to. But as the principal agitators, as well as the best educated men, were amongst them, it was only natural that they should persuade the seamen proper to ignore this new method of grading, and to demand that all who were not able seamen were at least ordinary ones.

Faced with this calm refusal of their offer, and the formidable counterclaims, the Admiralty were in favour of resisting, and formed a plan for getting the majority of the ships to St. Helens and then taking strong measures with such as still lay obdurate at Spithead. But on Thursday, 20th April, this scheme was abandoned after a long consultation with Bridport, Colpoys, Gardner, Pole and sixteen captains, who urged the immediate concession of all the Assembly's demands as the only method of avoiding a deadlock.

The Admiralty thereupon drew up a fresh and final offer, granting the increase of pay to the able and ordinary

seamen of 5*s*. 6*d*. and 4*s*. 6*d*. respectively as demanded, but insisting on the landsmen being recognised as such, and only receiving a rise of 3*s*. 6*d*. The marines were also to receive the same pay at sea as on land, and wounded men were to receive full pay until fit, and, if declared incurable, a pension or admission to Greenwich Hospital. Provisions, too, were in future to be issued at the rate of sixteen ounces to the pound. Nothing was said about full pay for men while sick as apart from wounded, nor the increase of Greenwich Hospital pensions, nor leave when in port, nor fresh vegetables, all the subject of previous petitions.

The offer was also accompanied by a definite threat that, unless it was instantly accepted, the delegates of the General Assembly 'would suffer the utmost vengeance of the law. But, on the contrary, should they submit with alacrity, they will experience the forgiveness for which the Board of Admiralty have publicly and solemnly pledged their faith to them.'

The terms were soon known and well received in all ships, but the crews insisted on waiting for the General Assembly's advice before making individual answers. The arguments used in the debate in the *Queen Charlotte* are unknown ; but it must be supposed that the delegates were to some extent awed by the Admiralty's bluntness, and were willing to accept the meagre concessions offered, together with the promise of a free pardon and no victimisation. Anyhow, that is the state which affairs seemed to have reached when Colpoys, Gardner and Pole rowed over to know the Assembly's answer. Gardner appealed to the men's sense of loyalty and discipline, urged them to create a good impression by accepting at once, and offered to write the letter for them. He appears to have been engaged in this, with the approval of all

present, when the four delegates from the *Royal George* and *Queen Charlotte* came on board, having been ashore.

Their appearance at once changed the tone of the debate, and in a few sharp sentences they urged their brethren not to agree to weigh anchor until they received a full pardon signed by the King, with his seal attached. These men were Valentine Joyce, John Morice, John Hudelstone and Patrick Glynn, and, though their suspicions were groundless, their names deserve to stand above many so-called champions of democracy.

Gardner was furious ; all his penmanship for nothing, doubtless a difficult accomplishment at the best of times.

" You're a damned mutinous blackguard set who deserve to be hanged," he bellowed, seizing the most outspoken delegate by the scruff of the neck. " Get out," roared the delegates, equally incensed, and, with loud shouts and menaces from the assembled crew, the admirals were hustled from the ship. Soon afterwards a red flag was flown from the *Royal George*, and the seamen were observed to be mounting guns. The people of Portsmouth were greatly alarmed, being ignorant of what was happening, since the General Assembly had forbidden shore leave, ship visiting and letter writing. Lord Spencer, on hearing Gardner's report, drew up a solemn promise of pardon if the men would immediately return to duty, adding that no court would convict them on the strength of it, ' even if they suppose it possible that the Board of Admiralty, having publicly pledged their faith and honour to them, could ever be brought to break it.'

But the General Assembly was not convinced, and next day the delegates drew up their ' total and final answer.' They thanked the Admiralty for their promised concessions, but refused to lift an anchor until fresh

beef and vegetables were substituted for flour when in port, pensions augmented, 'the grievances of private ships redressed, an act passed, and His Majesty's gracious pardon' granted.

The Admiralty representatives had set out for London on the previous night, after hearing Gardner's account of the incident in the *Queen Charlotte*, and the delegates were therefore left in command. Like true champions of democracy, they were determined to maintain their personal ascendancy at all costs. Consequently, their ban on ship visiting, shore communication and drunkenness was aimed just as much at preventing a general surrender as it was at keeping down the extremists. In this way the majority of the seamen only heard the latest news through their own delegates, though naturally the air was full of rumours. A careful watch was kept on the boatloads of Jews and pedlars continually hanging round the ships, and, though the 'girls' of the port could not be denied entrance, when once on board they were not allowed to dissolve their 'temporary nautical unions' and go ashore until further notice.

All this time Lord Spencer had been doing his utmost to obtain the necessary Act of Parliament and royal pardon with the least possible delay. He was in London on Saturday, 22nd April, drove to Windsor in the afternoon and had the royal pardon printed and read on board the fleet by midday, Sunday, 23rd April. This was received with great satisfaction, but next day came the Admiralty's reply to the 'total and final answer,' and it was niggling and pettifogging.

The demand for more beef and vegetables was rejected on the grounds that as much was being done as was possible, and 'it has always been their lordships' intention to cause the full proportion of fresh beef to be

supplied.' The increased pensions were refused, the revenues of Greenwich Hospital being deemed insufficient, and grievances of private ships against their officers were to be the subject of courts-martial.

Time went on; a special committee of the Privy Council reported favourably on an Admiralty memorial on the subject of increased pay and provisions, and a Bill was prepared on those lines. But the Admiralty, full of ill-judged zeal, issued a series of orders for the better maintenance of discipline. No sooner were they read out to the crews than they produced a widespread suspicion of foul play and victimisation. Oblivious of the obvious fact that most of the orders were designed to smarten up the officers and to increase their sense of responsibility, the seamen fastened on the clauses which ordered the officers and marines to be kept in constant readiness to suppress disorder and the small arms and ammunition to be more carefully guarded.

In the face of these supposed signs of a panic-stricken *coup d'état* against the ringleaders, the orders to officers to stop the surgeons embezzling the men's medical comforts, to wear uniform when ashore, and not to sleep ashore without a flag officer's leave, were all looked upon as deliberate and cynical 'eye-wash.'

Nothing further might have occurred if only Bridport could have got to sea at once, but he was completely windbound. Meanwhile, the seamen watched the proceedings of Parliament with increasing distrust and anxiety, so that soon it became impossible for him to sail at all until the Bill should be finally passed.

Now, there exists a certain type of politician who thinks that an awkward question put to Government at an awkward moment is the beginning and end of statesmanship; nor is this habit the monopoly of politicians

of democratic origin. While the Privy Council was considering the plans for the seamen's Bill, the Duke of Bedford, a prominent Whig, asked the Government in the House of Lords for an official account of the recent disturbances. Naturally Lord Spencer was unwilling to prejudice the truce now awaiting confirmation by Act of Parliament by any detailed statement. In the general discussion which followed, Howe, who happened to be present, outlined his own part in the affair, but deprecated any attempt to force the Government either to champion or to regret its recent concessions. Other remarks followed, harmless enough in themselves, but all calculated to give the worst possible picture of the intentions of the Peers towards the seamen, supposing they were slightly distorted in the process of transmission.

The agencies of distortion were the *illuminati* of the Corresponding Society, the United Britons and the United Irishmen, who eagerly gobbled up the empty platitudes of the Peers and spread the news at Portsmouth that the seamen were betrayed and that Parliament would never pass their Bill. A fresh mutiny was quickly organised, and broke out on 7th May, just at the moment that the wind had changed and Bridport could have got to sea.

The same procedure was adopted as before, the yard-ropes were again reeved, the crews gave three cheers and the delegates again took charge, the officers making no resistance.

The Fleet was now lying at St. Helens, with the exception of the *London*, *Marlborough* and *Nymphe*, which were still at Spithead under Rear-Admiral Colpoys, with his flag in the *London*. On seeing what was going on across the water, this officer decided to maintain his

authority by extreme measures. He assembled his crew, asked them if they had any fresh grievances, and, on being assured that they had none, he ordered them to retire below, draw in the lower deck-guns and close the port-lids. He then paraded and armed the officers and marines and awaited the arrival of the delegates. Soon they appeared rowing steadily towards the *London*, whose men became so excited that they tried to come up the ladders. Some ' sportsman ' began to heave round one of the guns in the waist to aim it at the quarter-deck, on which he was shot dead by the first lieutenant, Peter Bover. A violent scuffle followed, in which the crew forced their way up the ladders, while others climbed out of the gun-ports and up the sides of the ship, and the marines deserted wholesale. Colpoys called the officers to the quarter-deck and they ceased firing. At the most only ten people had been killed or wounded altogether, but the seamen were furious, especially as one of their delegates had been hit. They crowded aft with oaths and menaces, pointing muskets and brandishing crow-bars, while the little group of officers below the poop stood and looked at them.

A yard-rope was reeved and the noose put round Bover's head, and he was only saved for the moment by the ship's surgeon, Smith, and by a seaman who had some influence with the crew and shouted out that Bover was a ' brave boy.' Colpoys assumed full responsibility for Bover's action, and was himself in considerable danger of being lynched, till Valentine Joyce of the *Royal George* and the other delegates of the fleet persuaded the crew to lock Colpoys, Bover and Griffith, the flag captain, into their cabins and leave them there for the night. Next day they were tried by a specially improvised court, which acquitted Bover of murder and sent him

ashore, largely through the forcible intervention of John Fleming, the new delegate of the *London*.

Meanwhile, all the ships of the line were concentrated at St. Helens, the mutiny being practically confined to them, and a large number of commissioned and warrant officers were summarily dismissed by the delegates and put ashore, including Gardner and nearly a dozen post captains.

While Colpoys's and Griffith's fates were still in the balance a messenger reached the *London* on 9th May with the news that the House of Commons had passed the seamen's Bill ; and next day, when the news was known throughout the whole fleet, they were instantly released and sent ashore.

Copies of the Act itself, now passed by the House of Lords, were available a few hours later, and, when the seamen read that £372,000 had been voted to cover the extra pay and victualling for the rest of the financial year, they were considerably elated. Nevertheless, things could not rest ; many outstanding questions had still to be settled, including the Admiralty's reply to the ' total and final answer ' and the position of the officers and warrant officers sent ashore in the last outbreak.

There was only one man who could effect such a settlement, and this was Howe.

III

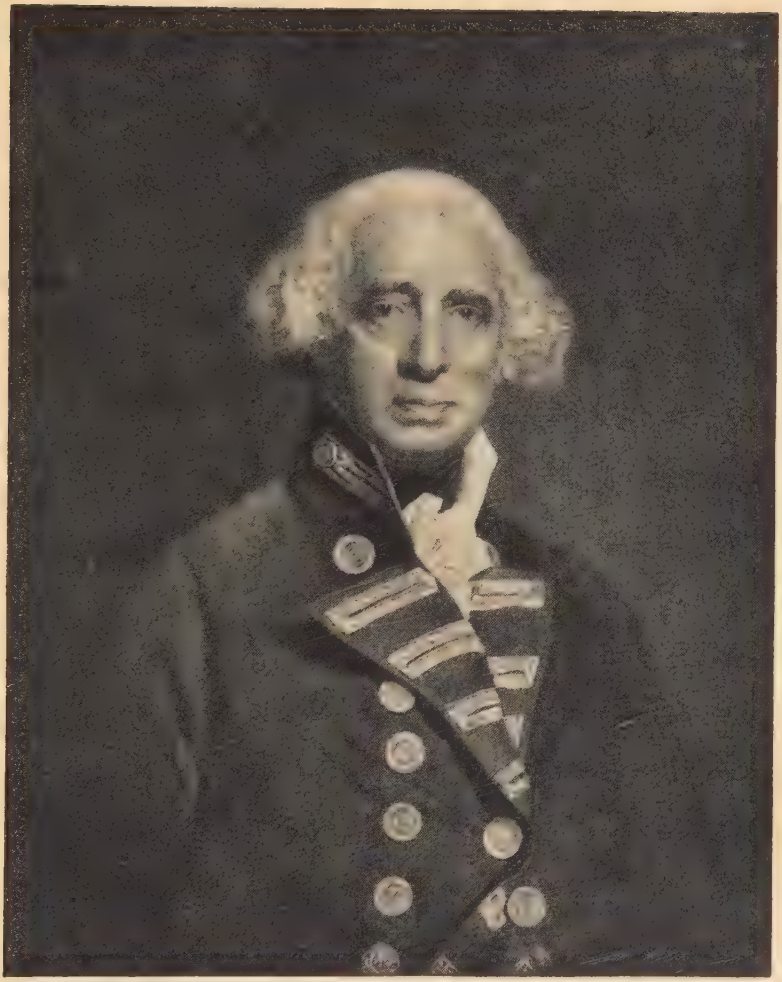
It is uncertain who suggested that Howe should be the Government's ambassador to Portsmouth, but, when the King and Lord Spencer decided to send him, they acted with considerable boldness. For, although he was the idol of the seamen and by far the most distinguished

officer in the service, there were other factors which might easily have ruined his embassy.

He had been very feeble ever since the First of June campaign, on which 'Glorious' day he had to be supported on a chair by his officers while directing the actions from the quarter-deck. He was still very feeble and had not been to sea for nearly a year, while in January he could scarcely cross his room at Bath on crutches. Now, all this ill-health was due to gout, and gout makes old gentlemen irritable and by no means ideal conciliators. Moreover, Howe was known to have an awkward temper at the best of times; and what guarantee was there that on reaching Portsmouth he would not fly into a gouty rage over some minor obstruction and then collapse? It is true that so far he had only shown hauteur in dealing with officers and high officials, while he had always been conspicuously conciliatory with regard to the seamen. He had been First Lord of the Admiralty just after the American War of Independence, and had had to undertake the unpleasant task of gradually reducing the fleet which he had himself done so much to build up, in face of gross incompetence and corruption. His handling of the 'axe' during this period and his attempt to maintain post-war efficiency with a small fleet had naturally raised a mass of enemies against him. Nor could it be wondered at that superseded admirals, cranky inventors, and disgruntled place-hunters should have been somewhat provoked when addressed in such terms of courteous flippancy as these:

Sir,—I am extremely happy to learn from your favour of the 27th, which I only received late last night, that you have found so much benefit from the Bath waters; and as far as my concurrence is necessary to it, I hope you will continue the use of them, while requisite for the perfect re-establishment of your health.

I am much obliged to you for your congratulations on my return to



RICHARD EARL HOWE

From the mezzotint by R. Dunkarton after John Singleton Copley.

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a situation which is not to be usefully occupied for the public service without assured permanency in my opinion, as well as talents in the application of its powers, which I cannot boast. I have only to say, at present, that I enter upon the duties of the office in the same ideas I have before expressed. But I am yet too confined in my prospect to foresee in what order of time they can severally be brought forward with due effect.

I cannot wish that you should have unnecessary fatigue in a journey to town on your return to Portsmouth, though were it otherwise your intention to pass through London, I should with pleasure embrace that opportunity to assure you of the esteem and regard with which I am

Your most obedient, humble servant,

Howe.

PS.—I sincerely hope the ladies of your family partake with you in the comforts of established health.

Whether or not Howe deliberately cultivated this vague and platitudinous style as a polite means of rejecting importunity, it is certain that he used it widely, and the writer has read many other unpublished letters from him of a similar nature.

Supposing some whim of gouty freakishness drove him to ' try it on ' with the delegates ?

On the other hand, there was something singularly fitting in the idea that he should clear up the mutinies, since it was largely his illness and Bridport's anomalous position which had allowed the disturbances to take place.

What was the use of having a Commander-in-Chief on crutches at Bath when the seamen's morale was in danger and when they thought the man in command on the spot was not qualified to receive their grievances or propose a remedy ? Besides, it was largely Howe's own fault, in any case, that the mutinies had occurred, for, when the petitions did at last reach him, he handed them over to the Admiralty without insisting on a searching enquiry into their origin. This was surely the proper procedure, and would have allowed the seamen's grievances to have been

raised quite constitutionally as service requests. Instead of this, he had urged that, because they all seemed to be written by the same person, they were therefore to be utterly disregarded. Such was the result of a lifelong study of lower-deck psychology.

The question of Howe's ill-health had already been causing the King great anxiety as far back as January 1795, when he wrote to Lord Spencer suggesting that Howe should be allowed to live ashore for the rest of the winter and take command again in the spring. Spencer heartily agreed with this plan, adding that 'the event of Earl Howe's retiring at this critical juncture from Your Majesty's service would, in Earl Spencer's humble opinion, be attended with consequences so highly prejudicial to Your Majesty's interests and the welfare of the country that no probable means ought to be left untried to prevent his coming to such a determination.' Apparently Bridport had at one time stated that, unless Howe either retired or came on board immediately, he himself would resign, and it seems a pity that he was dissuaded from adopting this straightforward and sensible course. His position as temporary Commander-in-Chief during the mutinies was difficult and humiliating, and it is strange that the King and Lord Spencer failed to recognise the necessity of having a Commander-in-Chief who was fit for service in the winter as well as in the spring. Nevertheless, it seems to have been most difficult to obtain 'winter admirals' of sufficient seniority, and St. Vincent's correspondence is full of complaints on this score. The truth was that, in Sir Byam Martin's words, 'the situation of Admiral of the Fleet is a sort of inheritance passing in succession according to seniority; it is, in fact, the gift of age and survivorship. It is not a professional compliment.'

In acquitting himself, therefore, with such exceptional credit on this, his last service, Howe performed a very remarkable feat and entirely blotted out his previous mistakes.

Arriving at Portsmouth on 11th May, accompanied by his wife, he was at once rowed over to St. Helens, and boarded the *Royal George*, *Queen Charlotte*, and *Duke*, and addressed the ships' companies; while later in the day he met the delegates of the remaining ships. During the next three days he went from ship to ship, talking to the crews in a quiet, friendly fashion, and also had several interviews with the General Assembly, whom he recognised unreservedly as the seamen's official spokesmen. Everywhere he used the same words, deprecating the violent methods used by the seamen on the first outbreak, and especially admonishing them for the second and more unseemly outburst while His Majesty and Parliament had been busy making their Act of redress. In all these encounters he was received in the friendliest possible spirit, the seamen well understanding the extent of his devotion in spending hour after hour, being rowed from one ship to another, in order to make lengthy and tiring speeches. He was so weak that the greatest care had to be used in getting him in and out of his boat when boarding the ships, and it was by an exercise of exceptional will-power that he was able to complete his task. Mere speeches, moreover, were not enough; for the seamen, although trusting Howe implicitly, were still extremely suspicious of Parliament, and it was only by the most patient arguments and explanations of the new Act and Admiralty Instructions that they were gradually won over.

Then, quite apart from the Act of Parliament, there were the 105 officers and warrant officers, including

Admiral Colpoys and four captains, whom the seamen had put upon their black list, and under whom they absolutely refused to serve. This was a very awkward business, especially as the delegates refused to consider a series of formal courts-martial, which, as they pointed out, would only serve to increase the general excitement and re-inflame the extremists. They insisted that 'their complaints were merely tendered to show that they had not acted from a spirit of disobedience, but that they meant to represent what they deemed just ground of complaint.' And 'applications being made,' continued Howe, writing to the Duke of Portland, 'on the part of the officers themselves, entreating that they might not be required to resume their command over men who had taken such exception to their conduct, I judged fit to acquiesce in what was now the mutual desire of both officers and seamen in the fleet.'

Howe was much blamed afterwards for committing the Government to this part of the settlement, but it appears to have been sensible and statesmanlike. Many unemployed officers of good character were thus given a chance to distinguish themselves, and the fleet was purged at one stroke of some of its stupidest bullies, though Howe recommended all the suspended ones to the Admiralty for future employment, and also that they should be kept on full pay.

At the last moment, when all was practically settled, Sir Roger Curtis's squadron of eight ships arrived at St. Helens from Plymouth, where a sympathetic mutiny had been organised. Howe quickly boarded these ships and settled their grievances, though not without agreeing to the removal of 65 officers and warrant officers.

Howe was now dead-beat with quieting 'the most suspicious but most generous minds he thought he ever

met with in the same class of man,' but at last the way was prepared for the King's Pardon, looked forward to by all the seamen as the final and absolute guarantee against victimisation at any future date. On 12th May Howe obtained it from London, but the General Assembly were suspicious of its wording, and another had to be prepared. Howe naturally declaimed against the insidious influences of unseen persons who stirred the seamen to distrust anything and everything promised by those in authority, but the history of how Government departments keep faith is one that clears them of all charge of 'pettifogging' in this respect. When the pardon was put into its final form and the delegates satisfied, Howe took it from ship to ship, where, the majority of the seamen being unable to read, were rejoiced to see the King's seal, attached to a document which their more intelligent brethren assured them had at last 'delivered the goods.' Howe staggered ashore, and was carried shoulder high to Sir William Pitt's house by the delegates, where they all feasted magnificently. Nor would he leave Portsmouth without organising a great demonstration of loyalty and thanksgiving to mark the end of the bad old days and 'a turning-point in the history of the Navy.' So next day, 15th May, he paraded through the fleet with the delegates, accompanied by his wife and a large number of officers, while the bands played patriotic tunes and the whole party were loudly cheered. The yard-ropes were removed, the new and returning officers welcomed on board, and Howe returned in triumph to London, while poor Bridport assumed the command-in-chief, feeling, if anything, more of a cypher than before.

The sentiments of the seamen on the settlement are well expressed by the following verses, which there is every reason to suppose were composed for the

occasion and were not the product of a London ballad-monger.

The tars of old England have long toil'd in vain,
From the time of King Charles down to the present reign :
But their royal master their wages doth raise,
So join, British sailors, in King George's praise.

The fleet of Lord Bridport, the terror of France,
Petition'd the throne that their pay might advance.
Their petition was granted, each grievance redress'd.
In the heart of each seaman great George he is bless'd.

Cheer, cheer, British seaman, your sails now unfurl.
Against our proud foes soon defiance we'll hurl ;
Our toils are rewarded, advanc'd is our pay.
Success to those seamen who gained us the day !

Adieu, pretty Nancy of Portsmouth, adieu !
When your William is absent I pray thee be true.
To fight for our king and our country we go ;
Our toils are rewarded, we'll face the proud foe.

Farewell to our children ; farewell, dearest wives !
We don't leave you distress'd, tho' we venture our lives ;
Our pay is advanced, which you shall receive ;
Then dry up each tear, girls, and cease for to grieve.

Three cheers, lads ! three cheers, lads ! we lose sight of land.
In defence of our country, we'll join heart and hand ;
And when we return, boys, we'll drink, dance and sing
With wives and with sweethearts, so God save the King !

IV

Considering the relationship between the employers and workers in 1797 and in the years immediately following, Howe's recognition of the delegates as the official representatives of the seamen was a great constructive precedent for future methods of industrial bargaining. At a time when any ' combination ' amongst workers was

looked upon as revolutionary and ungodly, he actually acknowledged the principle of the Trade Union in the Navy, where such organisations have never found much favour. Surrounded as we are to-day by the elaborate conciliation machinery of the industrial world and the regular methods of putting lower-deck views before the Admiralty, it is difficult to appreciate Howe's work too highly. He was greatly blamed at the time for his leniency, especially in the matter of the black-listed officers, but it is certain that if he had not taken the initiative in recognising the delegates he would have been forced into doing so in the end.

The difficulty was that the seamen had no constitutional methods of preferring their grievances, and they really imagined that their early method of anonymous petitioning was the only means available. Howe understood their position as soon as the mutiny began, although he had himself been sadly to blame in letting it occur at all. In the end, by working through the delegates, whom he saw to be men of spirit and prudence, he completely defeated the extremists both inside and outside the fleet, and so enabled the seamen to boast that in the Channel Fleet their whole conduct had been strictly professional.

Unfortunately the 'breeze at Spithead' carried the seeds of disturbance to the Nore, where it affected the whole North Sea Fleet, then watching the Dutch coast. Here the outbreak took on a discreditable and ruffianly tone. Although the seamen soon heard that their brethren at Portsmouth had won the advance of pay for the whole service, they insisted on a useless and troublesome 'sympathetic' mutiny, which might easily have endangered the settlement.

The outbreak began on 12th May and lasted till 15th June, and during that time the 'spirit of mischief'

worked so fiercely that the seamen got quite out of hand and terrorised Sheerness and the surrounding sea and land. Richard Parker, an ex-officer sent to sea from gaol, was elected head of the delegates, and it was largely due to his influence that a truculent attitude was maintained long after all reason for it had disappeared. Lord Spencer went to Sheerness and negotiated, but was treated with capriciousness and effrontery. Finally the Government, by enlisting the aid of troops, volunteers, merchants and a few loyal ships, was able to blockade and isolate the ships containing the ringleaders. The mutineers were shaken, and began to surrender one ship at a time, till all was quiet again ; and ' Admiral ' Parker was hanged, as he richly deserved to be. Other disturbances followed in different home and foreign stations, but they were only echoes ; and the cause of the seamen was both won and saved by the firmness and moderation of the men of the Channel Fleet.

Howe retired to his house near St. Albans, called Porter's Lodge, where he continued to be an acute and eager commentator on every successive phase of the naval war. In June 1798 he went to Bognor Rocks for ' warm sea-bathing,' but his gout gripped him worse than before, and he was forced, like Chatham, to live continually on boiled chickens.

Back at Porter's Lodge once more, he was as busy as ever writing long critical letters to his naval friends, for mercifully the gout did not affect his hands or his intellect. In the summer of 1799, however, Doctor Pitcairn, his medical adviser, having gone abroad, ' he was prevailed upon to try the effect of electricity, which at that time was creeping into fashion as a remedy for all manner of diseases. He left Porter's for that purpose, and came up to Grafton Street, where he placed himself under the

care of the practitioner most in fashion. After a few trials, however, the gout was supposed to have been driven to the head, and with such severity that he sunk rapidly under it, and expired on the 5th of August, 1799.'[1]

Thus, as we shall shortly see in Rodney's case, a most dangerous situation was successfully handled by a man whose health was so feeble that it directly contributed to the evil he was called upon to cure. And again, as in the case of Rodney, we see how unwise it is to place great and nerve-racking responsibilities on elderly gentlemen with few teeth, bad digestions, high blood-pressure, and chronic gout.

[1] Barrow's *Life of Admiral Richard Earl Howe.*

RODNEY

RODNEY

I

THE life of Rodney was tragic. He was appointed to the highest command when an ailing man, and after many of the best years of his life had been wasted. He succeeded in a most unequal contest against redoubtable opponents, though oppressed by ill-health and exasperated by the incompetence, corruption and treachery of his fellow-countrymen. He died amidst the execrations of the West Indian merchants, the derision of his brother officers and the ingratitude of his Government. Few men have made so many personal enemies.

It is a laudable myth that the British Navy has always been a silent service. But in the eighteenth century, although a high standard of professional reticence was generally observed in concealing facts useful to an enemy, no sooner was an action fought, especially an indecisive or unsuccessful one, than the whole country teemed with gossip and scandal. The reason is obvious: for nothing is so likely to encourage personal irritation as life in a profession which herds together large bodies of men for long stretches of time in dull surroundings and in trying climates. This irritation could always find an outlet in letters home, and thus the jealous admiral, the morose captain, and the wronged lieutenant have always been at liberty to relieve their feelings by blasting the reputation of their associates. Moreover, in the days before wireless, when London news took four weeks to

reach Jamaica, and when shore leave was less easily obtainable, fleet scandal was often the sole topic of conversation, and, by a process of co-operative distillation, produced an added venom when set down on paper.

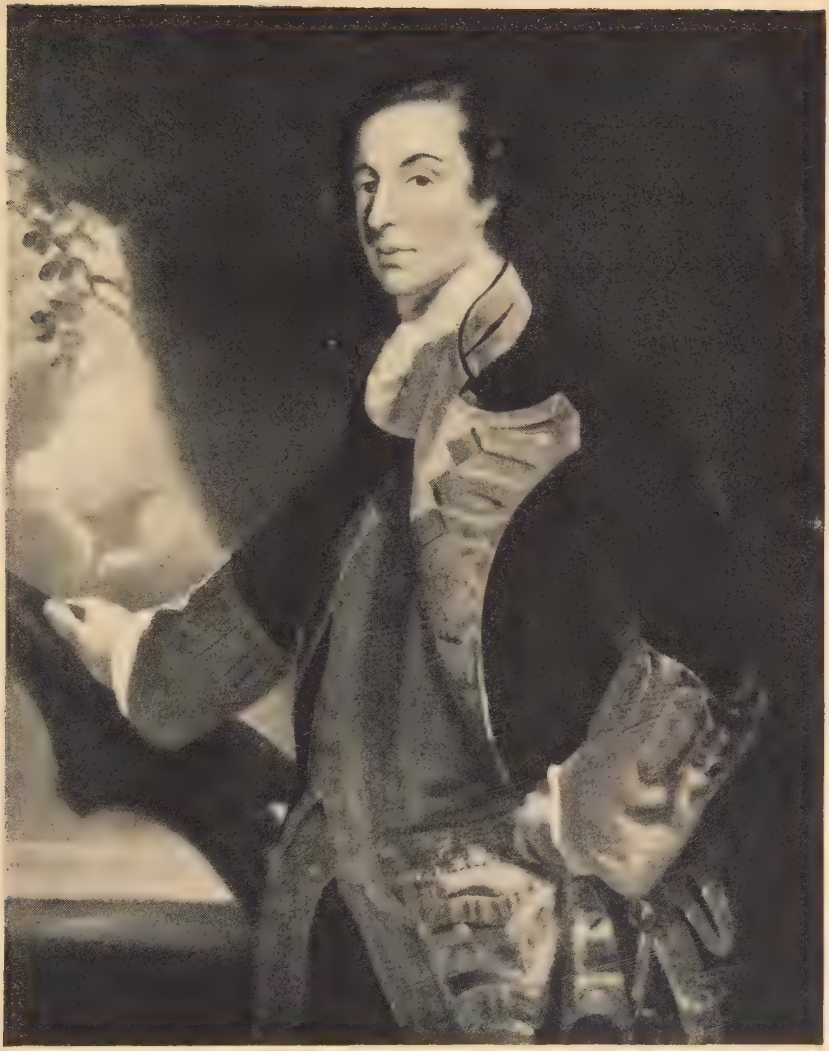
The letters of seamen, so strangely neglected by our biographers and historians, are packed full of the liveliest matter, for which we may search in vain amongst the correspondence of diplomatists and governor-generals, who, although often vitriolic, seldom lived with their superiors and subordinates under the same nerve-racking, cheek-by-jowl conditions.

Rodney was never tired of labelling nearly everyone he came in official contact with as a fool, a fraud or a traitor. Many of them deserved these epithets, but, whether they deserved them or not, they generally retaliated in kind by libelling Rodney by post.

George Brydges Rodney was always inclined to despise the ' salt-horse ' majority of his naval associates, and not without reason. He was a man of considerable ancestry, combining great executive ability with great social charm, accustomed to speak with the great upon great affairs, eager for his own advancement, yet dominated by a high sense of duty. Such a man was hardly likely to be popular in the eighteenth-century Navy.

He was born in 1719, sent to school at Harrow, and, by his father's interest as an Admiralty judge, entered the Navy as a King's-letter boy. Unlike so many bantlings thrust into the service by private influence, he soon proved himself a most capable officer, and at the age of twenty-three was made a post-captain. He fought his ship with exceptional ability at the first battle of Finisterre in 1747. In 1751 he entered Parliament as member for Saltash, and in 1753 he married Lady Jane Compton.

He was now well established in a great career, enjoying,



RODNEY

From the picture after Sir Joshua Reynolds in the National Portrait Gallery.

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through his political and family influence, continuous and easy employment during the peace period of 1748–56, when the Navy was considerably reduced. Naval officers in the eighteenth century were quite accustomed to take part in politics while employed on the active list. A seat in the House of Commons was looked on as a sure way of obtaining a lucrative command, and political leaders naturally tended to promote men who could make themselves useful by their votes and speeches.

In the Seven Years' War Rodney commanded the squadron which successfully destroyed the enemy's flat-bottomed boats and stores assembled at Havre for the invasion of England, and, being now a rear-admiral, was put in command of the expedition sent to capture Martinique. Not only did he accomplish this with great skill, but he also reduced the islands of St. Lucia, Grenada and St. Vincent, and became the acknowledged authority on West Indian naval strategy. He also received his first experience of the amazing and widespread system of corruption which the changing ownership of the islands permitted, and wrote home to the First Lord: 'The whole is a scramble who shall cheat His Majesty and the nation most.' The chief offender on this occasion seems to have been his colleague, General Monckton.

Having prevented, to the best of his ability, various frauds in connection with the capitulation of Martinique, he addressed himself to his political patron, the Duke of Newcastle, representing that the value of the salaries of the various posts connected with the government of the island would probably amount to four thousand pounds. These, of course, would be in the gift of the Duke, as first Lord of the Treasury and titular head of the Government. Rodney did not suggest that any of these posts should be given to himself or his friends, but he was at considerable

pains to show the Duke that by his conquest the Government's patronage would be considerably enlarged. He was a courtier, not a sycophant.

At the end of the war, in 1763, he was considered quite the most promising of the younger flag-officers, and was advanced to vice-admiral, raised to the dignity of a baronet and awarded the excellent shore appointment of Governor of the Royal Hospital at Greenwich at a salary of a thousand a year.

Here he ignored some of the grosser irregularities for which his political patrons were chiefly responsible, while vigorously espousing the claims of the hard-used pensioners to greatcoats. His Lieutenant-Governor, William Boys, who had been promoted from the forecastle, protested against what he considered unnecessary expense, greatcoats being usually issued only to the infirm. Rodney is supposed to have crushed him in the following, perhaps mythical, but none the less typical, words :

'I have the greatest respect for you as a man, who by the greatest merit has raised himself from the station of a foremast hand to the rank of an admiral, a circumstance which not only does you the highest honour, but would have led me to have expected you as an advocate instead of an opposer to such a necessary indulgence. Many of the poor men at the door have been your shipmates, and once your companions. . . . Never hurt a brother sailor : and let me warn you of two things more. The first is, in future not to interfere between me and my duty as Governor ; and the second is, not to object to the brave men having greatcoats, whilst you are so fond of one as to wear it by the side of as good a fire as you are sitting by at present. There are very few young sailors that come to London without paying Greenwich Hospital a visit, and it shall be the rule of my conduct, as far as my authority

extends, to render the old men's lives so comfortable that the younger shall say, when he goes away, "Who would not be a sailor, to live as happy as a prince in his old age!"'

In 1764, his first wife being dead, he married Henrietta Clies, who, as the second Lady Rodney, played such a great part in helping his interests in political and social life. So far Rodney had basked in the sun of Whig favour, and had already succeeded in his career beyond all ordinary bounds of expectation. But the end of the Seven Years' War was the end of Whig supremacy, in the special sense of the word, and the new King, George III, experimented with Ministries drawn from various Whig and semi-Tory groups, led by Lord Bute, the Duke of Bedford, George Grenville, Lord Rockingham, Lord Chatham and the Duke of Grafton. None of these was wholly satisfactory, political forms were changing more rapidly than usual, and when the general election of 1768 came on, Rodney found that he was no longer one of those for whom the Ministers were prepared to find a safe seat.

Judging that his continuance in Parliament was a necessity to prevent his professional extinction, he plunged into the contest as candidate for Northampton, and won the seat at the expense of £30,000. Being only a man of moderate means, this success was almost as disastrous as failure, and an active command on a lucrative station became almost a necessity. Luckily the opportunity was no sooner needed than it appeared in the Falkland Islands dispute with Spain, and in 1771 Rodney was appointed to the command at Jamaica, in expectation of war. But, to his astonishment and disgust, he was ordered to relinquish his post at Greenwich while holding an active command. Here was a pretty dilemma, for it was all very well to sail to the West Indies with the

possibilities of prize money galore, but what if there was no war after all, and he had to return after a couple of years, no richer than when he went ? And, in any case, a thousand a year was a thousand a year.

So Rodney wrote to Lord Sandwich and quoted as precedents the cases of three previous admirals who held the governorship while at sea. But the new First Lord was obdurate, the truth being that the new Ministry of Lord North's which had succeeded Grafton was finding great difficulty in obtaining parliamentary support, and had therefore to be very economical in bestowing its patronage. Besides, Greenwich was wanted for Admiral Francis Holburne, a Lord of the Admiralty who was about to leave the Board and could not be antagonised.

Rodney reached Jamaica in the worst possible temper ; the climate of Greenwich, although pleasant enough on the crest of the hill, is decidedly damp for those who live on the water's edge, and, in addition, the Governor's House faced north. Rodney had lived a strenuous life in his early days, and was always suffering from severe attacks of gout. Before leaving England he had been asked how he proposed to receive Lord Sandwich, who was coming to visit the fleet at Plymouth. Rodney replied that if Sandwich's yacht flew the Admiralty flag he would salute her with nineteen guns, but that if she came with a pendant only he would expect her captain to salute his own flagship, ' and, should he neglect to do so, I shall send a proper officer on board to place him under arrest for disrespect to the King's flag.'

On arrival at Jamaica he found that the sloop *Hawke* had been taken into Carthagena on a charge of trespassing in Spanish territorial waters. He at once dismissed her commander for ' tame submission to this insult,' and demanded that the Governor of Carthagena should take

similar measures against those responsible for the detention. If Rodney hoped by these methods to provoke a war he was disappointed, for the British Government rightly considered that the Falkland Islands question could be settled peaceably. Thus Rodney's provocative action was just what they least desired, and he received a sharp reprimand from Sandwich, with the hint that if war should come 'larger squadrons must be sent out, and, very probably, senior officers.'

Rodney was careful after this, and there was no further trouble with the Spaniards, but he characteristically raised a hornets' nest by building an aqueduct at Port Royal to convey fresh water from the hills to the shore and so save buying it in casks from contractors. Everyone was against it; the contractors and beach loafers, of course, and the seamen too, for it lessened intercourse with the shore and put a stop to an extensive and illicit traffic in rum. Nevertheless, the water from inland was much purer and the aqueduct represented a great saving of public money, yet Rodney received no thanks from anyone. He next attacked the smuggling business, which was one of the principal and most thriving professions in the West Indies. French ships were continually putting into the Jamaica coast 'under pretence of being bound to one of the free ports,' and landing their contraband goods, the naval officers being afraid to stop them for fear of prosecutions for false arrest.

The smuggling question led on to the more strategic one of preventing the French and Spaniards spying on our naval base and land defences at Jamaica. Rodney undertook a general survey of all their stations, sent petty officers in merchant ships to qualify as pilots, and prevented an Irish priest from 'tampering in favour of the Spaniards, with the King of the Mosquito Indians.'

Meanwhile, he asked Sandwich to recommend him to Lord North as Governor of Jamaica as soon as Sir William Trelawney, the then Governor, died. It was a charming scheme, and might with luck fit in nicely with the termination of his naval command. But Sandwich was distinctly vague and suggested that Rodney had better write to Lord North himself; so far as he knew, there was no other competitor, but, really, after all, Sir William Trelawney was not yet dead. He did die, however, in December 1772, and the post went to Captain Sir Basil Keith, whose brother was Ambassador to the Court of Vienna.

Rodney returned home in 1774 no better off than when he left, though with economy it is presumed he could have contrived to maintain a moderately comfortable existence. Moreover, in 1771 he had been nominated Rear-Admiral of England, a sinecure office of great antiquity, carrying with it a salary of £332 a year. He was qualified to receive the pay for this office, together with his half-pay as soon as he struck his flag and resigned his active command, so that his expectations were by no means hopeless. But he had no notion of economy, and plunged into reckless expenditure as soon as he came home, which his son-in-law, General Mundy, describes in the following tasteful words: 'Possessing a pleasing and handsome exterior, with courteous manners and address of the accomplished gentleman' (qualities not particularly valued by the Navy in those days), 'he had at all times, when on shore, been received into the highest circles of fashion, where he took in the draught of pleasure as others did. And his heart being warm and generous, he not infrequently found himself involved in pecuniary difficulties.' It is not difficult to recognise in this delicate apologia the reason for his retirement to Paris early in 1775, where he lived 'in very straightened circumstances,'

till the French Government decided to give active support to the American colonists in their War of Independence, when he at once offered his services to Lord Sandwich. His offer was acknowledged, but neglected.

II

Every day he grew more impatient; the French were fitting out a fleet, Paul Jones was received in Paris with enthusiasm, while in England the admirals were already chosen to command the forces mobilised to meet the new situation. Rodney could not get a command unless he pushed his interest personally in London. He could not go to London, because he would be arrested for debt. His pay as Rear-Admiral of England was years in arrears, and would cover his debts, but the Navy Board could not disburse it unless he returned to England, and he could not return to England because he would be arrested for new debts incurred in France. In fact, it was only through the connivance of the French police that he was allowed to live in Paris unmolested, and had he attempted to leave the city they could no longer have protected him.

Lady Rodney, therefore, returned to England with her daughters to do what she could by urging his friends and relatives to approach the King and Lord North on his behalf. But meanwhile help came from a totally unexpected quarter, for Maréchal Biron, a distinguished French soldier, hearing of his embarrassment, most generously offered to lend him sufficient money to pay his French debts, lest so worthy an opponent might be prevented from taking part in the war. Rodney at first refused to accept the money as disadvantageous to his honour, but, on the offer being repeated a fortnight later,

he gratefully accepted one thousand louis. He at once paid his debts in Paris, and while waiting to depart visited 'all those great families from whom I received so many civilities, and whose attention in paying me daily and constant visits, in a great measure kept my creditors from being so troublesome as they otherwise would have been.'

On arriving in England, he applied to Drummonds, the bankers, who immediately advanced the money to repay the Maréchal. But for the moment he was too late, all the important commands had gone, and, though he was able to put his case personally before the King and was advanced to the rank of Admiral of the White, his chances of active service seemed as remote as before.

The naval war, however, was going distinctly the wrong way; Keppel's ships had been severely handled off Ushant, d'Estaing had kept Howe on the defensive in North America, and then beaten Byron off Grenada. More serious still was the inability of the Government to find enough ships to blockade the chief French bases in Europe, so that reinforcements for the West Indies and North America were able to leave Brest and Rochefort with impunity, while a fleet from Toulon blockaded Gibraltar, and Spain declared war against us and besieged it by land.

At home, too, there were serious differences of opinion as to the propriety of continuing the war, a powerful body of Whigs headed by Edmund Burke and Lord Rockingham contending that we should at once come to an arrangement with our American colonists, and so forestall our Continental enemies. They even went further, and said that, excluding the French and the Spaniards altogether, we had no constitutional right to coerce our colonists. But Lord North's Government,

although aware of the necessity for reconciliation, was unwilling to do anything which should derogate from what it conceived to be the full constitutional rights of the Parliament at Westminster, and in this attitude it was strongly supported by the King.

Unfortunately, this sharp difference in political opinion thrust its way into the higher ranks of the Navy, with the result that co-operation between the Admiralty and the Opposition flag-officers became almost impossible. Hawke, Howe and Keppel all felt the position to be intolerable, especially after Keppel's partisan court-martial by Sir Hugh Palliser after the battle of Ushant.

Lord Sandwich realised that the naval situation was serious, and therefore asked Rodney to prepare a memorandum stating what force was necessary to give us superiority both in the West Indies and North America. He was probably induced to consult Rodney for three reasons. Firstly, Rodney had had more recent experience in the West Indies than any other senior flag-officer; secondly, he was at the moment unconnected with the Opposition, and, finally, he had himself submitted an entirely unsolicited memorandum on this subject during the previous year. In this he had urged the importance of St. Lucia as a base, and the necessity for its immediate capture, in preference to Martinique, which had been recently devastated by a plague of ants. He had also emphasised what was a commonplace of Atlantic strategy—namely, that a fleet in the West Indies could only operate effectively from November to June, owing to the hurricane season coming in the summer and autumn; whereas, on the North American station, June to November were the best months, the winter and spring being too stormy for continuous cruising. Consequently, one fleet could easily do duty on both

stations, provided it had proper bases and supplies waiting for it at each end.

In his new memorandum, Rodney noted that the desired base, St. Lucia, was now in our hands, and suggested that a force of about fifteen of the line might act alternately on both stations, by reinforcing each from the other.

Immediately after the battle of Grenada, Admiral Byron returned home in very bad health with his second-in-command, Barrington, who had been wounded, so that Sandwich had now to find a commander-in-chief for the squadron left in the West Indies under the temporary command of Rear-Admirals Rowley and Hyde Parker. Rodney redoubled his efforts to secure the post for himself, and at last, on the first of October, he was appointed, to his utmost satisfaction, Commander-in-Chief of the Leeward Islands and Barbados station. Sandwich, who had known all about his qualifications and ability for years and had persistently discouraged him, now acted as if he had made some sensational discovery, and continually preened himself as being the patron of the new naval prodigy.

Rodney's instructions were that he should get to sea as quickly as possible and go to the relief of Gibraltar, taking with him troops, store-ships and victuallers, at the same time protecting the outward-bound trade to the East and West Indies. But he quickly found, as as other admirals have found, that to have instructions is one thing, and to get to sea is another. As usual, the available ships required extensive repairs, the dockyards were devoid of sufficient materials and the officials dilatory. At last he was ready to leave Portsmouth, but was prevented by heavy westerly winds which made it impossible to get down Channel. Sandwich was in agonies.

'For God's sake go to sea without delay,' he wrote, and at last Rodney did, but only to be driven into Plymouth. Here, as at Portsmouth, he was immensely irritated by shoals of letters from people of fashion asking him to take their sons to sea or to give important posts to such as were already in the service.

Moreover, he began to complain of severe gout in his feet and hands, and found writing most difficult, but he continued to send long letters to his wife, despite the press of business, referring affectionately to his daughters and his dog, Loup. Evidently the strain of command was already telling on his weakened constitution, and it is significant in the light of his later moods that he wished to be clear of land, as then he would 'only have to discipline the fleet, and have done with writing.' 'I hate this place,' he wrote of Plymouth; and later, 'the whole town of Plymouth and Dock declare that more work has been done here since my arrival than had been done for two months before. Such is the effect of fear.' Thus did Rodney commit himself to the theory that by fear he must rule.

On 29th December he was off at last with twenty-two of the line, fourteen frigates, and an immense crowd of victuallers, troopships and merchantmen. Off Finisterre he chased and captured seven Spanish warships and sixteen valuable merchantmen heading for Cadiz, and on the afternoon of 16th January, when off Cape St. Vincent, he sighted a Spanish fleet of eleven of the line. It was getting dark, and there was a heavy sea running; the enemy were already making off for Cadiz and Rodney was 'confined to his bed.'

The possibilities of a striking naval victory seemed fairly remote, but Rodney at once signalled 'General Chase' and 'Engage the enemy from the leeward.' The

wind was blowing on shore, and he therefore designed to catch up the Spaniards by dispensing with a formal approach in line of battle and to prevent their escape by getting between them and the coast.

The result was a furious night action, aided by the moon, and which ended in four Spanish ships, including the commander-in-chief, being captured, two being wrecked after surrendering and one blowing up. Nothing like it had happened since Quiberon Bay.

Rodney's flag-captain, Walter Young, afterwards asserted that it was he who brought about the victory, and that Rodney had wished to prevent the general chase and to approach more cautiously, thus losing time. Doubtless Young gave his advice and Rodney accepted it, but, after all, one of the chief duties of a flag-captain is to give advice ; it is for the admiral to accept or reject the advice, and the responsibility for success or failure rests with him alone.

To have left his convoy under the prevailing conditions, and forced a night action on flying enemies near their own harbour of refuge, was a fine stroke of naval leadership, and as such was instantly acclaimed. ' I scarcely know how to find words to congratulate you enough upon your late glorious successes, and upon the eminent services you have done your country,' wrote Sandwich, for with the news of his victory there came also the news of his successful re-victualling and relief of Gibraltar and Minorca.

Rodney himself, though outwardly indifferent to criticism, was actually in a fever of excitement to know what was being said of him in London. He was soon satisfied by letters from his wife and children reporting great popular rejoicings, street songs being sung with choruses ' Brave Rodney for ever.'

'I have had a great many people wish me joy at the dancing academy,' wrote his daughter Jane, and then, with some concern at his own letter, 'I am afraid you are worse than you say you are, for you write very low-spirited, I think. Pray keep yourself as quiet as you can. It would be horrid for you to have a fever in the hot country you are in [going to, i.e., the West Indies] and people you do not know to wait upon you.'

Sandwich was triumphant: 'The worst of my enemies now allow that I have pitched upon a man who knows his duty, and is a brave, honest and able officer,' he wrote. It was, in fact, a distinct success for the ministerialists who had been taunted with the accusation that no flag-officer of any ability would consent to serve under them.

But, although he was eager to hear how the news was received at home, Rodney had become utterly morbid about his command.

'One thing I can say without dread of reproach,' he wrote to his wife, 'that I can defy envy, malice or even villainy, to tax me with not having done my duty even to the utmost extent. But without a thorough change in naval affairs, the discipline of our navy will be lost. I could say much but will not. You will hear of it from themselves. I have done them all like honour, but it was because I would not have the world believe that there were officers slack in their duty.' To Sandwich he described the slackness as due to political faction, and pledged himself to remove it root and branch. Sandwich replied: 'I fear the picture you draw of the faction in your fleet is too well drawn . . . time and moderation . . . will by degrees get the better of this bane of our discipline. . . . I doubt not but that we shall lay this many-headed Hydra at last asleep.'

If faction was as rife as they asserted, things were indeed bad, but it is more than likely that Rodney's views were coloured by his own ill-health. 'Thank heaven I got from Gibraltar,' he wrote to his wife. 'I hope never to see it again, for I have not had one day's health since I went there.' It was this letter which prompted the anxious postcript from his daughter Jane.

III

When Rodney reached the West Indies in March 1780, the strategic situation was as serious as any with which a British admiral has had to cope, and Rodney was not even physically fit. He was only sixty, not old in the sense in which we speak of age to-day, and not really old for the eighteenth century. But he was old for a seaman of those days, when exposure and hardship of a kind now unknown thinned the list of captains and made the survivors admirals.

A considerable literature exists in which the horrors of naval life afloat are faithfully depicted. Descriptions of rotting ships, built of unseasoned timber, and filled with foul and stinking bilge-water, are commonplaces of the English language. Everyone knows that huge crews were herded into incredibly small spaces in order to provide enough men to handle the guns which themselves occupied most of the space. And, of course, everyone has heard of the disgusting ships' victuals.

Little attempt has been made, however, to estimate the effect of these conditions on the brain and temper of the command. The strategic and tactical handling of fleets of many ships requires more than the basic naval qualities, good seamanship and personal courage, and it was in these extra qualities that so many flag-officers of

the eighteenth century were deficient. Extreme heat, extreme cold, and extreme damp, filthy food, too little exercise and too much port were their lot, and at sixty they were generally suffering from gout, bad temper and premature senility. They were still good captains, but they were bad admirals, fearful of incurring responsibility, and already dominated by 'the increasing cautiousness of incipient paralysis.' Being unwilling either to command or to resign, they were generally guided by a forceful second-in-command or flag-captain, and so drifted along oblivious of indiscipline in the fleet and corruption in the dockyards, spending most of the day in bed.

Rodney was not one of these, his imperious and ambitious temper never for an instant permitted any abdication from his position as commander-in-chief. But in other respects he was equally difficult to deal with. There is no doubt that his constitution had been thoroughly undermined by his previous services and by the dissipation and straitened circumstances of his more recent years, and it is known that he suffered from stone. In appearance, too, he had altered considerably. He had always been handsome, elegant in his manners and exquisitely dressed, and in youth his features, though delicately shaped, might well have fallen into the category of 'regular' as understood by the British Passport Office. At sixty, however, his face had become hard and strained, while the loss of his teeth gave him a forbidding and hawk-like expression. The absence of teeth, moreover, was in itself a great handicap when endeavouring to extract nourishment from naval victuals, as it prevented proper mastication, and thereby impaired the digestion and aggravated the gout. All these disabilities combined to make him fiery and dispirited by turns, so that, although his will-power prevented him

from collapsing altogether, his genius was apt to appear in sudden flaming jets which were as often followed by fits of exhausted dejection. He had always been slightly contemptuous of his brother seamen, but now his fury at their real or supposed ill-conduct mounted to a white heat of passion, all the more terrible because it was expressed not in the language of the forecastle or even of the ward-room, but in biting and polished phrases, the sting of which was seldom forgiven.

But, whatever his physical limitations might be, Rodney was an expert in West Indian strategy, so that he had no need to spend a long time appreciating the local conditions, and had determined what he wanted to do long before he arrived.

The West Indian islands lie in a curve across the Gulf of Mexico, the larger ones, Cuba, Jamaica, San Domingo and Porto Rico being to the north and west, and the smaller ones to the south and east. All naval strategy in connection with them was based on the fact that from October to June they are swept by steady and continuous easterly winds, called the trade winds. Changes in temperature produced by the islands themselves cause a number of local on-shore and off-shore winds, while just to the west of each island there is often a patch of complete calm, due to the island sheltering the adjacent water from the trade wind.

Thus the navigation amongst the islands by sailing ships was a difficult matter, firstly because of the local winds and calms, and secondly because the utmost care had to be taken not to be carried right across to Mexico by the trade, which soon made itself felt a little distance from the islands, accompanied by a strong westerly current. Consequently naval commanders placed more importance on being to windward of their enemy than they did in

FLORIDA
BAHAMA ISLANDS
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT BRITISH TRADE ROUTES,- OUTWARDS VIA BARBADOS,- HOMEWARDS VIA ST KITTS & YUCATAN CHANNEL
Havana
CUBA
YUCATAN CHANNEL
Cap François
TRADE WIND
SAN DOMINGO
HAITI
JAMAICA
MONA PASSAGE
PORTO RICO
Kingston (Port Royal)
St. EUSTATIUS
St. KITTS
NEVIS
MONTSERRAT
BARBUDA
ANTIGUA
GUADELOUPE
SAINTS
MARIE GALANTE
DOMINICA
Fort Royal
MARTINIQUE
St. LUCIA
BARBADOS
St. VINCENT
GRENADINES
GRENADA
TOBAGO
TRINIDAD
CURAÇOA
MAP TO ILLUSTRATE RODNEY'S CAMPAIGNS IN THE WEST INDIES.
0 100 200 300 Miles

European waters, where changes of winds are frequent and the weather-gauge often a matter of luck. The smaller islands of Martinique, St. Lucia and Barbados are distinctly to windward of Cuba, Jamaica, San Domingo and Porto Rico, and also of St. Kitts, so that the side which had strategic control of the Windward Islands (as they were called) had the Leeward Islands at their mercy. The Windward Islands were fairly evenly divided between France and England, and the control was therefore in dispute, the chief naval operations consisting of attempts to capture enemy islands by the blockade, defeat or evasion of enemy squadrons, followed by a landing of troops.

Moreover, the islands themselves were of immense commercial importance, their principal exports being sugar, molasses, coffee, cotton, rum, cocoa, ginger, lime-juice, rice, syrup, tortoiseshell and snuff. They were occupied by wealthy merchants who worked the plantations with great numbers of slaves, and in addition possessed factories and refineries for preparing their goods for export. As the principal islands had changed hands so many times in recent years, it was the custom of these gentlemen to pay very little attention to the rights and duties of belligerents and neutrals, and to carry on their trade regardless of these restrictions, even when it meant supplying the enemy through the agency of a neutral island. Rodney had found them sufficiently difficult to deal with when it was a clear-cut case of war between France, Spain and England; but, when the American colonists were added to our enemies, the planters in the English islands practically refused to treat them as such. Nelson met with the same difficulty after the war, when the planters continued to regard the Americans as still possessing their original rights under the Navigation

Laws, and he incurred considerable hostility in putting a stop to what was clearly an illegal trade.

At the beginning of the American War, the only naval bases we possessed were at Antigua, Barbados and at Port Royal, Jamaica, the first two being by no means satisfactory, and the last quite good, but too far to leeward. The French, on the other hand, had excellent facilities at St. Lucia, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Cap François in Haiti, the French part of San Domingo. In an area where naval stores had to be brought from a distance and where proper facilities for careening and refitting were distinctly scarce, the control of these bases was of the greatest importance, while, in addition, the hurricanes lasting from June to October made it essential for warships to have some harbours of refuge. English merchant ships usually reached the West Indies by standing south nearly to Madeira, and then bearing away south-west with the trade winds and making their first landfall at Barbados. For the homeward journey they often assembled at St. Kitts, and then stood north by east to the latitude of Bermuda, where they ran into the Gulf Stream and turned north-east for home. Ships from Jamaica, however, generally avoided beating back to windward to reach St. Kitts by running west, through the Yucatan Channel, and then out into the Atlantic between Florida and Havana.

Rodney reached Barbados in March 1780, and was ' carried very ill on shore,' but in a few days he was able to proceed to St. Lucia, where he joined Hyde Parker with a total of seventeen of the line.

The French had already captured Dominica, St. Vincent and Grenada ; but Barrington had captured St. Lucia, where we now possessed the anchorage of Gros Islet Bay, which Rodney had previously emphasised as being of the

utmost importance. Thirty miles north lay Fort Royal, Martinique, and in it the French fleet of twenty-three of the line under the Comte de Guichen, a veteran officer of nearly seventy, just arrived from France. In concert with the Marquis de Bouillé,[1] Governor of Martinique, he at once decided to capture Barbados and put to sea with 3,000 troops. In addition he wished to cover the passage of a convoy of merchantmen heading for San Domingo, and consequently, by the time he started to beat back between Dominica and Martinique in the direction of Barbados, Rodney, who had been watching Fort Royal closely, was all ready to beat to windward of him with his whole fleet. 'At daylight on the morning of [April] the 17th,' he wrote, 'we saw the enemy distinctly beginning to form the line ahead. . . . At forty-six minutes after six I gave notice, by publick signal, that my intention was to attack the enemy's rear with my whole force, which signal was answered by every ship in the fleet.' Thus Rodney designed to mass his whole force against one part of the enemy's line, and, by concentrating a superior number of guns against an inferior, to cripple and capture as many ships as possible before the enemy's van could bring them assistance. Unfortunately, this manœuvre required a compliance on the part of the enemy which was not easily forthcoming. Rodney was steering north and de Guichen south, and they were about three miles apart. De Guichen divined Rodney's intention, and immediately turned north on a parallel course. Rodney then turned south, and as his fleet came abreast of de Guichen's rear he saw that the moment had come. The French line was full of gaps and extended to a length of nearly ten miles, whereas the English ships were closely concentrated.

[1] 'A quick choleric, sharply discerning, stubbornly endeavouring man.'—Carlyle.

Rodney, therefore, turned north again and made the signal to prepare for battle, followed by his hoisting the Union flag at the main top-gallant-masthead and firing a gun. This was the executive signal on which ' every ship in the squadron is to steer for the ship of the enemy which, from the disposition of the two squadrons, it must be his lot to engage.'

Rodney fully believed that, in the light of his original signal to concentrate on the enemy's rear, his ships would bear down in close order, but, to his utter mortification and fury, he saw Captain Carkett take the *Stirling Castle*, the leading ship, right up the enemy's line, as if he were bent on attacking their leading ship.

The reason for this mistake was that, according to the Fighting Instructions, the words, ' which, from the disposition of the two fleets, it must be his lot to engage,' meant that ships should engage their opposite numbers in the enemy's line, counting from the van. Moreover, there were grounds for assuming that, as so many manœuvres had intervened since 6.46 a.m., the signal for the concentration on the enemy's rear no longer held good. Rodney had only just arrived from England, and had had little time for practising evolutions, so that it can easily be seen how the error occurred. But, unfortunately, the trouble did not stop with the *Stirling Castle*, for the *Ajax* followed her, while Hyde Parker, who presumably should have known something of Rodney's intentions, acted similarly to his subordinates and carried the rest of the van up the French line, not far enough to engage their opposite numbers, it is true, but far enough to spoil Rodney's concentration.

In the centre and rear most captains kept an eye on the *Sandwich* and bore down as Rodney desired, but the *Grafton* followed the van, and Captain Bateman in the

Yarmouth was so confused that he neither followed the van nor joined his admiral, and for a time lay to out of range and did nothing. Consequently, when the *Sandwich* drove three French ships to leeward in succession and passed through the French line, she was practically unsupported, and de Guichen, having no opponent to contend with, bore south with his next ahead and astern and 'continued battering her for an hour and a half.' Rodney was thoroughly in his element, and maintained the contest finely till four o'clock, when the *Yarmouth* came into action, though not without fouling the *Suffolk* in so doing. Rodney had already ordered her into action by a special signal, and had tried to fire a gun into her, to make Captain Bateman wake up.

The rear division, under Rear-Admiral Rowley, had meanwhile come into action, and the *Montague*, after being severely battered, had had to leave the line. Soon after four, however, the French broke off the fight without having sustained much damage, except in those ships directly opposed to the *Sandwich*.

Strategically the battle of Martinique was a victory for Rodney; the French designs on Barbados were frustrated and their fleet driven away to the north and forced to take refuge at Guadeloupe. Nor could they return to Fort Royal, since Rodney blockaded it, but shortly afterwards they were supplied with cordage and other naval stores sent from St. Eustatius, a neutral Dutch island, in two ships, under the direction of a traitorous English merchant living at St. Christopher's (St. Kitts).

Rodney, however, could not maintain the blockade, the *Sandwich* being only just able to keep afloat after the battle, and several other ships being much damaged, so that he soon had to withdraw most of his fleet to Gros Islet Bay, St. Lucia.

While still off Fort Royal he wrote a famous despatch to the Admiralty in which his subordinate flag-officers and captains received, by implication if not in definite statements, the most severe censures. Carkett was named as having led 'in a manner so contrary to my open and avowed indication of bringing the whole force of His Majesty's fleet against the enemy's rear.' Rodney also stated that many ships did not get close enough to the enemy, although he 'repeated the signal for a close action. With truth, but sorrow, I must say it was little attended to.' This could hardly mean less than a charge of gross insubordination, if not cowardice. 'The French Admiral,' he continued, with sombre anger, 'who appeared to be a brave and gallant officer, had the honour to be nobly supported during the whole action. 'Tis with concern inexpressible, mixt with indignation, that the duty I owe my sovereign and my country obliges me to acquaint your Lordships that during the action with the French fleet on the 17th instant, His Majesty's—the British—flag was not properly supported.'

To Lady Rodney he was even more explicit about 'the gallant behaviour of my captains, who, when victory, the most glorious victory ever obtained by a British fleet over the French, was in their power, chose to decline accepting it, and were passive lookers-on. My public letter will do them ample justice; and I hope the nation will make them an example to posterity of what those persons deserve who dare to betray their country.'

Having partly relieved his feelings in this way, Rodney set about 'restoring discipline' in the fleet, as he called it. As a preliminary he put Captain Bateman and Lieutenant Appelby under arrest, pending their trial by courts-martial, Bateman on a charge of withdrawing from his station in the line and disobedience to signals,

and Appelby for withdrawing the *Montague* from the line, without orders, after her captain was wounded and he was left in command.

Undoubtedly he had good reason to be angered by the frustration of his masterly plan for crushing de Guichen's rear, but it is evident that his intentions were quite honestly misunderstood by at least half the fleet. The concentration signal had no indication attached to it, to show for how long it was to be considered as operative or in what tactical form it was to be executed. Moreover, to engage ship to ship, counting always from the enemy's van, was one of the most established methods of fighting a sea-battle. Rodney was only just out from England, he had had little time to discuss tactics with his captains or to practise them at sea, and the existing signal-book, although capable of indicating his intention to concentrate, gave him no means of correcting the mistake when once it had been made.

Rodney did not appreciate this; to him the whole business was a clear case of slackness and disobedience, prompted even by political spite. The fleet required to be taught obedience, that was all; a glorious opportunity had been missed—it must not be missed again. Terrorism was the only cure.

With this end in view, he no sooner discovered, through frigates, that the French fleet were refitted and off Martinique than he put to sea and kept in touch with them for fourteen days, during which time 'neither officers nor men could be said to have had sleep. Nothing but the goodness of the weather and climate could have enabled us to endure so continual a fatigue. Had it been in Europe, half the people must have sunk under it. For my part, it did me good; and, as I had given public notice to all my captains, etc., that I should hoist

my flag on board one of my frigates, and that I expected implicit obedience to every signal made, under the certain penalty of being instantly superseded, it had an admirable effect, as they were all convinced, after their late gross behaviour, that they had nothing to expect at my hands but instant punishment to those who neglected their duty. My eye on them had more dread than the enemy's fire, and they knew it would be fatal. No regard was paid to rank ; admirals as well as captains, if out of their station, were instantly reprimanded by signals, or messages sent by frigates ; and, in spite of themselves, I taught them to be, what they never had been before—*officers*.'

During these exhilarating exercises the French were twice brought to partial action, but with no definite result, as de Guichen for the most part contented himself with holding off to windward and 'keeping an aweful distance.' Rodney, also, found that it was not easy to direct operations from a frigate, since it meant that he remained on the disengaged side of the line of battle, and therefore 'could never be a judge of it.' Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote: 'Everybody approves of your intention of hoisting flag on board a frigate in the next engagement. I have not the smallest conception of how any signal can be made or order given whilst the admiral's ship is engaged with the enemy, and it is surprising that so absurd a custom should have subsisted so long, and that no admiral has had the courage to break through it.' There were definite tactical reasons, however, quite apart from the difficulty of judging the situation from the disengaged side, which made it essential for the commander-in-chief to be in 'one of the principal ships of force,' since subordinate flag-officers and captains

looked to the 'Admiral,' as the flagship was called, for guidance in case of sudden changes of wind or of the position of the enemy. Situations of this kind demanded instant and last-minute alterations of course and canvas, and, since it was generally too late to make an elaborate signal, the only thing possible was to look to and copy the motions of the 'Admiral,' generally situated in the centre of the line. Rodney only flew his flag in a frigate so as to act as whipper-in to his officers; he soon gave up the experiment, and it has seldom been repeated since.

By this time his original despatch describing the battle of Martinique had reached the Admiralty and the letters of various officers in the fleet had reached their friends. Official and social London was overwhelmed with anxiety and excitement. Was it a victory? Who were the delinquents? No one quite knew, not even the Admiralty, who published Rodney's despatch, omitting the censures, but retaining the remark about the French admiral having been well supported. Public opinion at once acclaimed the battle as an undoubted victory, but was more convinced than ever of the 'intolerable conduct' of certain officers. 'Many persons have been here to sound me about them,' wrote Lady Rodney, 'but you may trust me, that not a word shall escape my lips that can be taken hold of by either party; nay, I am ever so cautious that I am afraid of repeating what I hear by common report, lest they shall say that they had it from me, and conclude it must be true from this circumstance.'

Lord George Germain, in his letter of congratulation, hoped that 'those captains whose behaviour you disapprove will have been brought to trial upon the spot.' 'The resolution you show,' he continued, 'in endeavouring to keep up, or rather restore, discipline is highly

meritorious, and you will meet with every encouragement and support in the attempt.' This is a most interesting letter, seeing that Germain, then Lord George Sackville, was dismissed from his command for failing to obey the verbal orders of Prince Ferdinand Brunswick to charge with the British cavalry at the battle of Minden.

Meanwhile, the friends of all the officers in the fleet continued to 'pass many anxious hours,' which they beguiled by writing off long letters packed full of all the rumours of the town, so that in a few weeks the West Indies knew more or less what London was thinking.

Rodney, therefore, selected five captains whose good conduct he officially certified in a letter to the Admiralty. These were Young, his flag-captain, Bowyer of the *Albion* and Douglas of the *Terrible*, who 'really meant well, and would have done their duty had they been permitted'; Molloy of the *Trident*, 'who bore down to engage the enemy agreeable to the signal I made to that purpose' . . . but was 'commanded by the admiral in whose division he was to follow him,' and Houlton of the *Montague*, who also bore down properly, but was 'dangerously wounded' and his ship withdrawn by Appelby. 'More certificates I have not given, nor shall any consideration in this line induce me so far to prostitute my honour and character as an officer, as to give, under my hand, what is not really dictated by my heart and conscience.'

On analysis these remarks conveyed the gravest censure on Hyde Parker, who, as commander of the van, presumably prevented Bowyer and Douglas from doing their duty, and who signalled Molloy to follow him instead of keeping close up with Rodney and the centre. It is, therefore, not surprising to hear that as soon as

Hyde Parker returned home he became one of Rodney's bitterest and most outspoken critics.

It would perhaps have been well for Captain Carkett if he had seen this letter before it was sent, for no sooner did he hear from home that he had been mentioned by name in Rodney's original despatch than he wrote a note to Rodney asking if it were true, as his information was really a leakage of news from the Admiralty.

Rodney had so far held his peace with this unfortunate officer, who had been promoted from the forecastle for the most meritorious courage, but, being challenged, he replied in a typically virulent letter of inordinate length:

'I have received your letter of yesterday, acquainting me you are credibly informed, that in my public letter to the Admiralty . . . your name was mentioned.

'It certainly was; and that you mistook and did not properly obey my signal for attacking the enemy, agreeable to the 21st article of the Additional Fighting Instructions. . . . Your *leading* in the manner you did, inducing others to follow so bad an example . . . the van division was led by you to more than *two leagues distance* from the centre division. . . .

'Could I have imagined your conduct and inattention to signals had proceeded from anything but an error of judgment, I had certainly superseded you; but God forbid I should do so for error in judgment only. I only resolved, sir, not to put it in your power to mistake again, upon so important an occasion, as the leading a British fleet to regular battle.

'You may now, sir, however painful the task, give me leave fairly to tell you, that, during the time you have been under my command, you have given me more reason to find fault with your conduct as an officer, than

any other in the fleet, Captain Bateman excepted, by your inattention to signals. . . . Judge yourself, what I must have felt, to observe the two oldest Captains of the fleet I had the honour to command, were the only persons I had just reason to reprimand by public signal.'

Meanwhile, Sandwich was writing on 14th July: 'I am exceedingly obliged to you for the circumstantial, though unpleasant account you give me of the behaviour and principles of some of the superior officers under your command. I shall treasure in my mind the very judicious information you have given me concerning them, and of course be cautious how they are ever employed in anything that requires judgment or subordination, which, in my opinion, are the two principal requisites in a person who seeks to figure in a military capacity.'

Thus the agitation provoked by Rodney's original despatch continued to boil and simmer. 'The fatigue of body and mind that I have undergone for these six months past has been such,' he wrote to his wife, 'that I am surprised, now it is in a manner over, how I could possibly get over it. . . . The court-martial will commence to-morrow on Captain Bateman, who commanded the *Yarmouth* in the battle of the 17th of April, and withdrew from it. If all were to be tried who misbehaved on that day, I know not where judges could be found, and I do not choose delinquents should try delinquents; therefore, only a few are selected, as an example to others; but I have sent, and will send home most of those captains. . . . My public letter I am sorry they did not publish; it was truth, truth itself; and I will never consent to erase one word of it. It is indifferent to me whether Parliament enquires into it: I will prove it true, that scarcely any man deserved my public applause

but the captain of the *Sandwich*; he has more merit than all the rest put together. I find the world call out aloud, that I should have praised those who had done their duty on that day. Show me the man (my own captain, and a few others excepted) that deserved praise; and then let them blame me if they can. I would fain think it was ignorance; I am unwilling to think worse. Part, I am sure, was villainy, with the hope of upsetting the Administration. I have told them so; and, if it is necessary, can bring my charge home.'

All this time he had been extremely active in protecting trade and in trying to gain intelligence of the enemy's whereabouts. At the beginning of June, de Guichen was reinforced by a fleet of twelve of the line from Spain, and 11,000 troops. Rodney was now heavily outnumbered, but the allies showed little inclination to take the offensive and failed to agree amongst themselves.

De Guichen waited at Cap François till August, and then sailed home to France with the main West Indian trade convoy. Rodney saw off the August convoy from St. Kitts, arranged for another to follow in October, sent a few of his battleships home, arranged for the disposition of the rest, and then sailed for Sandy Hook with ten of the line, believing that de Guichen was also going to North America during the summer.

IV

The Commander-in-Chief of the North American station was Vice-Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot, a truculent person of no particular ability, believed to have been sixty-eight years old at the time.

Rodney arrived at Sandy Hook on 14th September, and at once assumed supreme command and set about

plans for co-operating with General Sir Henry Clinton, commanding the British army at New York. Arbuthnot, who looked upon the North American station as his own private estate, was infuriated at Rodney's appearance, and, although Rodney was acting in strict conformity with the intentions of the Cabinet, scarcely a month passed before they were involved in violent quarrels.

By 16th October Arbuthnot was writing to Rodney, his superior officer: 'How far, sir, your conduct (similarly circumstanced as you are) is praiseworthy and proper, consequences must determine. Your partial interference in the conduct of the American War is certainly incompatible with principles of reason, and precedents of service.' And to Germain a week later: 'Your lordship will form a just opinion of my sentiments of the presumptuous interference of Sir George B. Rodney in my command, from the accompanying extracts of my letters to the Secretary of the Admiralty, and I must intreat your Lordship to add your voice to the check it is necessary for the public service this officer should receive; because his spirit, inflamed by good fortune, and unguided by reason, drives at the subversion of all order and all discipline.'

By December it was worse: 'Admiral Sir George Rodney displayed the most wanton unprecedented abuse of power that ever was exhibited,' he told Germain, 'has stripped the storehouse of all the necessaries both for ships and men; he has carried away two frigates, impressed 400 seamen, mostly out of the victualling ships and transports, and has so debilitated me that I have not an escort to convoy them home.

'And notwithstanding that he has not had the smallest reason for coming here in person, and still less for remaining without orders till November, the hurricane in the

West Indies will be pleaded in his favour. My Lord, I judge not so of officership; I insist that he came here without orders, that he tarried here an unreasonable time, without the smallest necessity, and that he is gone and left two transports behind, one with clothing for 3,000 men, the other with timber to build barracks for the troops in the West Indies; why he has done so I know not, I have not a single pendant left here for the purpose. . . .' The letter ended with a request to be recalled.

Rodney began by being very polite. 'I am honoured by your letter of the 16th instant,' he replied to Arbuthnot's original outburst, 'and am sorry my conduct has given you offence. Every respect due to you as an officer and a gentleman, my inclination as well as my duty led me to pay you in the strictest sense. If any designing men by their insinuations have induced you to deviate from that good sense and politeness which Mr. Arbuthnot was always known to possess [?] I am sorry for it; and I am persuaded that in your cooler moments, when you reflect upon some of the paragraphs in your letter, you will wish they had been couched in more friendly terms.

'It was neither inclination nor choice that brought me to America. It was the duty I owe my King and country. I had flattered myself it would have met with your approbation. I regret that it has not: but I own I have the vanity to think it will meet with *his* approbation, to receive which is the greatest honour a subject can enjoy.

'Your anger at my partial interference (as you are pleased to term it) with the American War, not a little surprises me. I came, indeed, so far to interfere in the American War as to command by sea in it, and to do my best endeavours to put an end thereto.'

This was quite one of Rodney's masterpieces, and

would have squashed a less obtuse subordinate, but there was far more in it than a mere quarrel over command and precedence.

Rodney's sagacious flag-captain, Walter Young, soon put his finger on the root of the trouble. 'I am exceedingly sorry to inform you,' he wrote to Sir Charles Middleton, the Comptroller of the Navy, 'that Mr. Arbuthnot does not draw well with either his superior or any other officer. The loaves and fishes in both departments have occasioned much disappointment; and I am afraid this said prize money is, and will be, the bane of all public service. You will be astonished to hear of the conduct of some of our supposed great men—and of a secretary; in short, sir, Mr. Arbuthnot is so led by Mr. Green, that he is either directly or indirectly in possession of every place under the navy—victualling, sick and hurt, and every other branch where the public money can be got at. Indeed there is no method that has not been put in practice—such as forgery in pilot's bills, serving the condemned provision to the French and American prisoners, and charging the Government with serviceable, and every other species of villainy. I would therefore recommend it to the public offices in general to pay none of his until they have applied to those gentlemen whose names may be affixed to his bills, to know of them whether they did attest them or not; and proof likewise in every other circumstance where the said Mr. Green or Admiral Arbuthnot have been concerned, respecting the market prices. The abuses of the hospital are beyond description; this Mr. Green has had the physician discharged (turned out) and every other person who has impeded his rapacity.'

And a fortnight later: 'Mr. Arbuthnot's secretary follows the example of the great; he loses sight of no

opportunity to rob and distress. In my last I gave you an account of such circumstances as the people chose to send me ; I am now to inform you of a part of his villainy which I can personally prove, which is the purchase of fresh beef. He is supplied with it at Sandy Hook at 10*d.* York currency per pound, and charges the public 1*s.* sterling per pound, consequently he clears 5*d.* sterling, or near it, on every pound supplied. . . . With the rapacity of this man of the Navy, and others such as this fellow is, and those in the Army of the same kidney, how can it be supposed that a Minister and a nation can support a war ? '

Rodney's own report to the Admiralty on the same matter was sombre and dignified : ' I am ashamed to mention what appears to be the real cause and from whence Mr. Arbuthnot's chagrin proceeds, but the proofs are so plain that prize money is the occasion, that I am under the necessity of transmitting them.'

But when he was back once more in the West Indies and had had time to reflect on the general situation, he came to the conclusion that the lifelessness of the campaign was due as much to slackness and corruption in the Army as it was to the same faults in the Navy. Although Clinton professed himself willing to co-operate with the fleet in every possible manner and heartily abused Arbuthnot, whenever Rodney suggested any specific enterprise he was always met with arguments which proved it to be impossible. And these arguments he was perfectly convinced were not justified by his own ignorance of the technicalities of land warfare.

He, therefore, took the opportunity in writing to Germain to deliver a grand *ex cathedra* denunciation of the management of the whole North American campaign in a style seldom equalled by any naval commander :

'I am sure your lordship will believe that I have no other view whatever in these my observations, but that you should have a true insight into the transactions carrying on in America, and I can with truth and honour aver no personal resentment, pique or hatred, to any man whatever, either in the Army or Navy, biases my thoughts. Nothing but the natural affection an Englishman bears, or ought to bear, his King and country irritates my mind when I behold her treasures squandered, her arms inactive, and her honour lost, and by the very men entrusted with the most important and honourable confidence of the Sovereign and his Ministers, paying not the least regard to the sufferings of their country, but retarding the completion and extinction of the rebellion, to make the fortunes of a long train of leeches, who suck the blood of the State, and whose interests prompt them to promote the continuance of the war, such as quartermasters and their deputies, *ad infinitum*, barrack masters and their deputies, *ad infinitum*, commissaries and their deputies, *ad infinitum*, and all of which make princely fortunes, and laugh in their sleeves at the generals who permit it, and by every means in their power continue to discountenance every active measure, and, instead of having an idea of speedily concluding this unhappy war, their common discourse turns on what may occur in the two or three ensuing campaigns.'

It is not surprising that under these circumstances Rodney was able to do little in North America but stir up trouble and expose corruption, and was only too glad when the lateness of the season practically compelled him to sail for the West Indies again on 16th November,

V

During Rodney's absence from the West Indies a great hurricane had swept the islands from end to end, accompanied by a severe earthquake. Twelve British warships had foundered or been wrecked and thirteen more had been seriously damaged, and immense quantities of naval stores had been destroyed, so that, having few dockyard facilities in any case, the problem of maintaining the fleet at a respectable strength became most difficult. Barbados, 'the most beautiful island in the world, has the appearance of a country laid waste by fire and sword,' wrote Rodney. 'More than six thousand persons perished, and all the inhabitants are entirely ruined.' 'I have received my dear Jenny's letter from Brighton,' he wrote to his wife, 'for which I think myself highly obliged by the description she has given of her own bathing, and the affection of my dog Loup, when the women took hold of you. . . . Notwithstanding I am so pleased with her letter, I am not quite so with her writing; I fear her master is a bad performer, and does not teach her a woman's hand. Nothing is so shocking in a lady as a masculine hand. . . . Pray don't let any of my girls go to a boarding school. I cannot bear it. They will learn nothing there but mischief.'

Rodney reached Barbados on 6th December, 1780, 'to find a scene of desolation,' while, to add to his difficulties, his squadron was badly damaged by another hurricane while on its way from New York. Nevertheless, he decided to take the offensive at once, and arranged with General Vaughan, commander-in-chief of the troops in the Leeward Islands, for a joint attack on St. Vincent, whose defences were said to have suffered severely

in the hurricane. Some delay, however, occurred and they did not manage to effect a landing till 16th December, by which time the French had been warned. Moreover, the defences on the high ground appeared to be much stronger than was believed, and, after some reconnoitring, Vaughan and Rodney decided that they had better withdraw to St. Lucia.

This was distinctly provoking, and even Captain Young was of opinion that the failure was in some measure due to Rodney's mismanagement. A few days later, however, they were all much elated by the arrival at St. Lucia of Rear-Admiral Sir Samuel Hood with eight of the line and four frigates, together with a convoy of 118 merchantmen. Hood was the first and only officer with whom Rodney came in close contact after assuming an independent command who was his equal in energy, skill and powers of expression. His previous career had been quite ordinary, and he had accepted the retiring post of Commissioner of Portsmouth Dockyard and had been made a baronet by George III during one of his visits. Sandwich had been at his wits' end to find a suitable second-in-command for Rodney, and, after making a special series of promotions, had pitched on Hood, who was known to be attentive to duty and presumably well-disposed towards the King and his Tory ministers. He was fifty-seven when he joined Rodney, but he lived to be Nelson's hero, 'great on all occasions,' and to receive Nelson's body at Greenwich.

With this welcome reinforcement Rodney was ready for any active enterprise, when, on 27th January, 1781, a sloop arrived from England with the most exciting news.

For months past Rodney had been much exercised

about the attitude of the Dutch in the West Indies to the war. They had three islands, St. Eustatius, St. Martin and Saba, lying just where the Windward and the Leeward Islands joined. They were small, unfavoured and practically barren, but, being neutral, St. Eustatius, the largest and most important of them, had rapidly come to occupy a great position in West Indian war-time trade. There went the British merchants, anxious to trade with their French and American enemies, while the Americans brought bacon and maize for the sustenance of the British West Indian slaves. British, French, Spanish and American merchants all met here on equal terms, and, in addition to ordinary trade, started a huge traffic in contraband. Meanwhile, the Dutch waxed fat and built rows of warehouses along the shore, which they let out at sums which were exorbitant, but well worth paying, since many merchants from neighbouring belligerent islands stored their goods there permanently, to avoid the risk of a raid. In this general orgy of 'bad neutrality' the British Government easily came off worst, since it was the only one which had a vital interest in stopping trade, the others being all allied and intent on preserving the trade between the islands and North America. Rodney had already complained that the Dutch, not content with their illegitimate profits, were actually refitting 'American piratical vessels,' which were bold enough 'to insult his Majesty's flag in the grossest manner' while lying in Dutch anchorages. Moreover, it was from St. Eustatius that the French fleet had been supplied with naval stores, all contraband, after the battle of the 17th April.

Imagine, then, Rodney's extreme satisfaction when the sloop *Childers* arrived with instructions from the Admiralty that, in consequence of our disagreement

with the States General over our claim to seize enemy goods in neutral ships, the King had 'determined to take the most vigorous measures for vindicating the honour of his Crown,' and that it was judged that this could best be done by an immediate attack on the Dutch West Indian Islands.

These instructions were dated 20th December, 1780, and they had therefore taken thirty-eight days to arrive, which meant that, in all probability, they were the first intelligence to reach the West Indies of the impending war with Holland.

Rodney at once communicated with General Vaughan, who had received similar instructions by the same ship; and they left St. Lucia on 30th January. After showing themselves off Martinique as a blind, and leaving six of the line to watch the French squadron in Fort Royal Harbour, Hood was sent ahead to prevent any Dutch warships escaping from St. Eustatius, and Rodney himself arrived on 3rd February. 'The surprise and astonishment of the governor and the inhabitants was scarce to be conceived,' a Dutch frigate having arrived from Europe only two days beforehand and 'allayed their fears of hostilities.'

The governor was summoned, and at once surrendered. St. Martin and Saba were also seized, and Rodney, hearing that thirty valuable merchantmen and a warship commanded by an admiral had left a few hours before Hood's arrival, sent three ships to chase them and had them all captured, the admiral being killed.

When Rodney landed and examined the island he found that its wealth exceeded all his previous imaginings. 'It is a vast capture,' he wrote; 'the whole I have seized for the King and the State, and I hope will go to the public revenue of my country. I do not look

upon myself entitled to one sixpence, nor do I desire it; my happiness is having been the instrument of my country in bringing this nest of villains to condign punishment. They deserve scourging, and they shall be scourged.'

'The riches of St. Eustatius are beyond all comprehension; one hundred and thirty sail of ships in the road, with one Dutch man-of-war of thirty-eight guns and five other ships of war, belonging to the Americans, and more than one thousand American prisoners . . . still a considerable number remain lurking in the mountains. Hunger will soon compel them to surrender at discretion.' 'The Dutch have been drubbed in such a manner, as not only the city of Amsterdam, but all Holland will feel the blow, as well as many of our people in London. It will teach them for the future not to supply the enemies of our country with the sinews of war: they suffer justly.'

But that was just where the trouble lay, for, though the 'perfidious magistrates of Amsterdam' were now public enemies, their treacherous British agents were not, and consequently, when British goods were seized along with those of the Dutch, French and Spaniards, they set up a monstrous wail. Three million pounds' worth of merchandise were found in the warehouses which were let out by the Dutch at a rental of over a million a year.

'The just revenge of Britain is slow but sure,' announced Rodney majestically to the Governor of Barbados. 'It has at last overtaken the perfidy of Holland, and will be a lasting memorial of the just punishment due to those who wantonly break solemn engagements.'

To Germain he even assumed a biblical tone: 'Thank

God that Providence has ordained General Vaughan and myself to be the instrument of a great, powerful, but injured nation to scourge them for their perfidy, and scourged they shall be.' He then went on to describe the island: 'It's about five miles long, its road[1] on the lee side, and capable of anchoring a thousand sail. The lower town extends the whole length of the beach, which is more than a mile long, and I believe, from its immense commerce, the most populous place in the world, the whole being warehouses built at an extraordinary expense. Even a single room in the meanest house could not be had under one hundred pounds a year sterling. One particular house, belonging to a Bermudian, and a principal supporter of the American War, let for no less a sum than three thousand pounds a year sterling, such profit was made by the pernicious commerce carried on by the inhabitants of this island, which enabled them to be so expensive. The Bermudian, Mr. Jennings, will be sent to his own island, to reflect on his disloyalty and rebellious principles. . . . It is impossible for your lordship to conceive the tricks that have been attempted to be played upon General Vaughan and myself to induce us to quit the island, when they found we were proof against bribery, under every head whatever. Expresses upon expresses have been forged of a superior enemy's approach, but, as I have taken care that Sir Samuel Hood should be to windward of Martinique with fifteen sail of the line and five frigates, the enemy's approach from Europe or America must be timely discovered, and General Vaughan and myself are determined not to leave so great a capture to the State to be liable to a *coup de main* or in a condition worth recapture.'

[1] Anchorage.

That was all very well, but Rodney and Vaughan seem to have lost their heads completely. Infuriated at the tricks which had been played upon them, they confiscated property in every direction, which in the general confusion prevailing led to an immense amount of unofficial plundering. 'It is almost general, both by sea and land,' wrote Young. 'I am sorry to see it; but, as every man in our service has his mode, we must eternally continue irregular; it answers no purpose for an officer to punish for practices of this kind without the whole follows the same plan.'

News arrived that the King had surrendered all his claims over the captured property to the naval and military forces, but Rodney had practically anticipated this by his sweeping measures. The French and Spaniards, being enemies, were ejected from the island, but allowed to retain most of their goods. The Dutch merchants were allowed to leave, with only their household goods and furniture. 'The very few respectable men in this island were those who owned sugar plantations. Few of them were concerned in the pernicious commerce which proved so detrimental to Great Britain. They have been treated with the respect due to them, as have likewise the honest inhabitants of Saba and St. Martin's, who seemed pleased with the change of Government and I believe will prove loyal subjects.'

The Jews were 'hurried from the island, destitute of everything.' All naval stores were confiscated and ordered to be taken over by the various British dockyards in the West Indies, to prevent their being bought up by enemy merchants. All the remaining goods and merchandise of every description that could be sold on the spot were then put into a great auction, which went on for days, attended by merchants from the neighbouring

British Islands, only the late owners being prevented from bidding. All goods which could not be sold on the spot were loaded into an immense convoy, preparatory to being taken to England.

In these transactions the traitorous English merchants naturally came off worst, every single thing they had in the island being seized. Their books were carefully examined, and found to be full of letters to London merchants relative to promoting trade with the enemy, and Rodney had two of them arrested and sent to England for trial.

Moreover, when the ships at anchor in the road came to be examined, twelve proved to be English, belonging to the convoy brought out by Hood, and which had mysteriously left him on approaching St. Lucia. It is clear that Rodney and Vaughan dealt with these rogues and traitors in the manner they deserved, but unfortunately they had overlooked a clause in the King's gift of the spoil, which exempted all property belonging to his subjects engaged in legitimate trade with the neutral Dutch. It therefore behoved the commanders to be extremely careful to prove direct intercourse with the French, Spaniards or Americans before making each confiscation, and in this respect they seem to have acted with a wild, indignant negligence. The merchants of St. Kitts, being the ones most heavily hit, instructed their attorney-general to take up the matter with Rodney and Vaughan, to whom they also sent a long 'remonstrance.' In this they claimed that goods belonging to them had been seized, although forming part of their legitimate trade with the Dutch, permitted by Act of Parliament; that the insurance effected on part of these goods waiting transhipment to England was entirely wasted, and that Rodney and Vaughan would be held responsible for their

safety. Finally they argued, speciously enough, against the confiscations as creating a dangerous precedent, which the French might use if they captured islands belonging to Great Britain. This was, of course, absurd, as it was not a case of seizing enemy goods, but goods passing between British and enemy merchants, under the protection of a neutral flag. But Rodney and Vaughan were adamant, and the attorney-general did not even get a hearing, so for the moment the merchants were crushed.

Meanwhile, the prior claims of St. Eustatius prevented the commanders from showing initiative in other directions. When Rodney first reached St. Eustatius, it had been his intention to send Hood and Vaughan south to capture the Dutch settlements at Curaçao and Surinam (Guiana). But, although Hood was still keen to go, Vaughan was unwilling, saying that he had not enough men. 'This is very surprising, General,' said Hood, 'for when you urged me so pressingly to speak to Sir George upon this business, you did not know but you might meet with resistance here, and have your force diminished; but now you have got possession, without the loss of a man, you fly from your own proposition, which is what I could not have expected from General Vaughan.'

Vaughan, however, 'made no reply, but turned away and addressed himself to someone else. The truth is, I believe, he could not bear the thought of leaving St. Eustatius, where he fancied there were three millions of riches.' The real truth about Vaughan's behaviour is difficult to determine, but the projected attack was certainly abandoned.

On 11th February a vessel arrived with intelligence of having sighted a French force of ten of the line and

seventy merchantmen heading for the West Indies. Rodney ordered Hood to take eleven of the line and five frigates from St. Eustatius and cruise to windward of Martinique on the east side, together with the six ships left to watch Fort Royal on the west. In this way he hoped to prevent any French fleet from Europe passing round the side of Martinique from to windward and entering Fort Royal, and this was the arrangement referred to by him in his letter to Germain. By 17th March both Rodney and Hood were convinced that the French squadron lately sighted could not be coming to the West Indies; but, unknown to them, a much more powerful French fleet was already on its way.

Rodney, regardless of this possibility, decided it was time to send home his St. Eustatius convoy, and, fearing that it might be intercepted by the four French ships lying at Fort Royal, he ordered Hood to bring the whole of his force round to the west side.

Hood was extremely annoyed. 'There never was a squadron so unmeaningly stationed as the one under my command,' he wrote in confidence to Sir George Jackson, the second secretary of the Admiralty. 'And what Sir George Rodney's motive for it could be I cannot conceive, unless it was to cover him at St. Eustatius; and it is equally difficult to be accounted for by Mr. Drake[1] and every captain. For what solid purpose, my dear Jackson, could the blockade of Martinique answer, for a few weeks only, unless a force was expected to make an attack on the island? As far as decency and any degree of propriety would permit me with an old friend and acquaintance, I gave my reasons against it, as you will see from an extract from one of my public

[1] Rear-Admiral Francis Drake, third in command of the British fleet.

letters, which I send for your information *only*. I urged him upon the same score in several subsequent letters, and in my private *ones* was still stronger, for we are, I believe, upon very good terms together; but he was not to be prevailed upon to let me go to windward.'

On 21st March Sandwich was writing to warn Rodney of a fleet of twenty-five sail 'now ready at Brest,' and gaily suggesting that they were destined 'to check your conquests.' This letter did not reach Rodney in time, nor would it have been of very much use, unless it could have been definitely established that the French fleet was intended for the West Indies. In the previous war Hawke had prevented the French sending help to their beleaguered garrisons in every part of the world by blockading Brest, but in the American War the Admiralty made no attempt to organise a blockade and the French were at liberty to come and go as they pleased. Consequently, naval commanders in the West Indies always had to work with one eye to windward against sudden surprise, which the Admiralty could neither frustrate nor give sufficient warning of in advance.

All went well for a time, however, and Rodney and Vaughan were just making their final arrangements at St. Eustatius, when, on 28th April, one of Hood's frigates reported a fleet of twenty of the line and 150 merchantmen. It proved to be the Comte de Grasse in the *Ville de Paris* (110 guns), with part of the fleet about which Sandwich had been writing on 21st March, the day before it sailed from Brest.

Hood at once stood to meet them, and next morning the two fleets were in action to the south of Martinique, but de Grasse, being to windward, refused to close.

On 30th April the fleets were again in contact, and Hood, finding that de Grasse had been joined by the four ships from Fort Royal which had slipped out, and that three of his own were seriously damaged, judged the odds to be too great and drew off. De Grasse then entered Fort Royal without opposition, together with his convoy, and Hood sailed north to join Rodney. They met on 11th June near Antigua, and anchored off the island to allow Hood's ships to refit and take in stores.

Meanwhile, de Grasse showed exceptional energy; embarking Bouillé and a strong force of troops at Martinique, he sailed south, captured Tobago and very nearly captured St. Lucia, Rodney and Hood being completely inactive. If, as Hood pointed out, a fast ship had been sent from England to warn them that de Grasse had left Brest, she would have reached them in time even had she started a fortnight later. But Hood was equally angry with Rodney for his delays at St. Eustatius, where 'the *lares* were so bewitching as not to be withstood by flesh and blood (as Lord Clive said in the House of Commons).'

'The admiral and general have a great deal to answer for,' he wrote, 'which I told them long ago; and they begin now to be in a squeeze, as many of their actions will not well bear the daylight. . . . They will find it very difficult to convince the world that they have not proved themselves wickedly rapacious.'

The whole affair was thoroughly discreditable to all parties except Hood. Had Rodney been to windward of Martinique with his whole fleet of twenty-two of the line, he could have forced de Grasse to fight in order to protect his convoy, by which he would have been seriously hampered and at a great tactical disadvantage. Moreover,

he would have been deprived of the help of the four ships lying to leeward at Fort Royal.

From this moment Rodney seems to have lost grip of the situation. 'It is quite impossible from the unsteadiness of the commander-in-chief to know what he means three days together,' wrote Hood; 'one hour he says his complaints are of such nature that he cannot possibly remain in this country, and is determined to leave the command with me; the next he says he has no thought of going home. The truth is, I believe, he is guided by his feelings on the moment he is speaking, and that his mind is not at present at all at ease, thinking if he quits the command he will get to England at a time that many mouths perhaps may be opened against him on the top of Tobago, and his not fighting the French fleet off that island after his public declaration he made to everyone of his determined resolution to do it; and again if he stays much longer, his laurels may be subject to wither.'

Hood's scathing indictment is probably true, but, even so, much of Rodney's irresolution is to be accounted for by ill-health, which made him depressed and oversensitive about his public prestige.

He had been given a free hand by Sandwich in deciding whether (1) to come home at the end of the West Indian season, (2) stay in the West Indies during the hurricane months, or (3) go to North America again, where it was suggested de Grasse would also sail when the West Indian hurricanes began. He was also informed that Arbuthnot had been recalled. He waited till 5th July, and then learnt that de Grasse had left Fort Royal with a large convoy. Eventually he decided that de Grasse must have gone to North America, and he therefore ordered Hood to follow and to return to the West Indies

SAMUEL VISCOUNT HOOD
(AT THE AGE OF FIFTY-NINE)

From the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds in the Manchester City Art Gallery.
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in October. Rodney shifted his flag to the *Gibraltar*, and went as far north as Bermuda ' to try whether a few degrees north would brace me sufficiently to do my duty ' —*i.e.* to go to North America himself—but the experiment failed, and he returned to England.

VI

Rodney reached England in September, to find himself no longer the hero of the hour. To his credit stood the defeat of Langara off Cape St. Vincent, the relief of Gibraltar, the battle of 17th April off Martinique and the capture of St. Eustatius. Moreover, it was realised that he had made the most strenuous efforts to improve the morale of his officers, and that his conduct while on the North American station had been both honest and patriotic.

During his absence he had been elected Member for Westminster, and after the news of the capture of St. Eustatius it was definitely rumoured that a patent was being made out for his peerage. Sandwich's and Germain's letters had become so fulsome that honest Captain Young wrote to Middleton, ' I am obliged to you great men at home, who have poisoned my admiral that he really and *ipso facto* thinks and believes himself to be the man you have represented him. God help us, how much mistaken you are and he ! '

Then came news of various setbacks : the expedition against St. Vincent had miscarried, Tobago was lost and St. Lucia threatened, until it seemed that Rodney had at last met his match in M. de Grasse. The end of the war was as far off as ever. Enthusiasm began to wane just as the clamours of the merchants of St. Kitts began to excite their friends in the City, and Rodney had

hardly landed before he became the subject of the most bitter attacks. Worse still, of the thirty-four merchantmen carrying the Eustatius convoy twenty-two had been snapped up off the Scillies by La Motte-Picquet.

Rodney, however, was too ill to pay much attention to these matters when he first arrived, and, after consulting London surgeons for stricture, from which he suffered considerable pain, he retired to Bath, accompanied by his family and Loup. While recuperating he was much cheered by his promotion to ' the high dignity of Vice-Admiral of Great Britain, in the room of the late Lord Hawke,' and set about publishing a selection of his official correspondence to justify his conduct at St. Eustatius. Most unfortunately, however, his literary agent published Hood's request to be allowed to cruise to windward of Martinique.

News of fresh disasters also arrived ; Admiral Graves, after taking Hood under his command at New York, failed to turn de Grasse out of Chesapeake, and as a result General Cornwallis, isolated at Yorktown, was forced to surrender, while a few weeks later Bouillé, anxious to score a notch off his own bat in de Grasse's absence, captured St. Eustatius from us with the aid of 1,500 troops and three frigates.

The war was now at its worst stage, and, as usual, scapegoats were required. None offered themselves very obviously, but, as Rodney appeared to have incurred the anger of the merchants, the Whigs decided to take up their cause on purely partisan grounds.

On 4th December, therefore, Burke moved for a committee of the whole House ' in order to enquire into the confiscation of the effects, wares and merchandise belonging to his Majesty's new subjects in the island of St. Eustatius, and further to enquire into the sale, distribution

and mode of conveyance of a great part of the said effects, wares and merchandise belonging to France and to the other parts of the dominions belonging to His Majesty's enemies.'

This was a subtle move, as it brought a fresh accusation against Rodney and Vaughan of having permitted the public sales to take place under such easy conditions that the French had been able to purchase large quantities of naval stores. Luckily Rodney was well enough to come to London and take part in the debate, which was opened by Burke with all the misdirected and self-righteous zeal which characterised his passionate attack on Warren Hastings. Rodney defended himself with some skill. He first denounced the conduct of the traitorous English merchants, and then was able to show that all the goods which could be classed as naval stores had been sent to the dockyard at Antigua and not sold at all.

To the charge of wasting time at St. Eustatius, which had been made during the debate, he cleverly but rather ambiguously asserted that the attack on Surinam and Curaçao was renounced owing to the first and inaccurate report of an approaching French fleet. Hood's position to leeward of Martinique was justified on the grounds that his frigates were stationed 150 miles to windward, far enough to give ample warning of an enemy's approach.

He also dealt with the attacks on Tobago and St. Lucia, and the vague charge of contributory negligence in the Chesapeake campaign. Altogether it was a passable, if not very clear, defence, and was corroborated by General Vaughan, who had also come home, and spoke as Member for Berwick. Burke's motion was defeated by 163 to 87, the voting being strictly on party lines.

Meanwhile, in view of the most recent disasters, the Ministers advised the King that Rodney should be asked to take command in the West Indies once more, as being the only senior officer congenial to themselves who was judged capable of saving the remainder of our scattered islands.

Rodney had by no means recovered, but after two interviews with the King, he was persuaded to accept the command, and to start at once, without waiting for the ships which he was to take out as a reinforcement. He hoisted his flag in the *Arrogant* at Spithead in the middle of December, and at once made three extremely important changes in the organisation of his fleet.

Firstly, he insisted on the appointment of an officer to act as chief-of-staff, with the title of Captain of the Fleet, or First Captain, thus leaving to the admiral's secretary only the direction of the administrative routine. For this post he chose Captain Sir Charles Douglas, the most brilliant gunnery 'specialist' of the day. His chief improvements were the introduction of special tackling to facilitate rapid aim, springs and slides to ease the recoil, quill priming-tubes fitted with prepared powder, flint-lock fire by means of a lanyard instead of by match, wetted wads to prevent premature explosion and flannel coverings for the charges.

Rodney's second appointment was equally noteworthy, namely that of Gilbert Blane, who had been his own private doctor during the last campaign, to be Physician of the Fleet. Having suffered so much himself, Rodney had listened to Blane's suggestions for improving the health of the fleet, and had insisted on them being sent to the Admiralty in the form of an official report. The remedies which Blane proposed

were simple enough, but he prefaced them by some amazing figures :

Total complement of 20 ships = 12,109 men.

In one year, killed in action and died of wounds ..	59
„ „ „ died of sickness on board	656
„ „ „ died of sickness in hospitals	862
Total deaths	1,577
Invalided home	350
Total losses	1,927

Nearly one sixth of the total complement.

Blane recommended that strict attention should be paid to cleanliness, dryness and ventilation ; that fruit and vegetables should be supplied to counteract scurvy, and wine substituted for rum ; that more medical necessaries should be supplied, and that ' filth, crowding and the mixture of diseases ' should be avoided in naval hospitals ashore by providing hospital ships to lie in harbour or accompany the fleet.

It was some time before these recommendations were given full effect, but Blane eventually became one of the greatest doctors of the age, and was consulted by naval, military and other Government departments on every conceivable question of service and civil hygiene.

Rodney's third appointment was that of three field officers of marines, who were to take command of the very large number of marines in the fleet when they were landed for combined operations. Previous experience had shown that, with large bodies, captains of marines were insufficient, and that their supersession by

naval or army officers only led to friction. It is clear, then, that in preparing for his final campaign, Rodney left nothing undone to make his organisation effective.

As usual, contrary winds and dilatory dockyard officials kept him from starting at once. He cleared Portsmouth, but was driven into Torbay and Plymouth, where he stayed windbound for three weeks, during which time the rest of his squadron completed their fitting.

'It is impossible for you to conceive my chagrin at being detained in this horrid port,' he wrote off Plymouth to his wife, 'where I have experienced nothing but storms of wind, neglect, unwillingness and disobedience to orders that they receive from the Admiralty. Faction and party has descended so low as to enter the minds of even dockyard officers, and induce them to do their duty negligently, for which they deserve to be turned out. Had I the power, I would dismiss them.'

Walter Young, his trusted flag-captain, had died in the West Indies, and, having just shifted his flag to the *Formidable*, he was infuriated by the slowness of John Symonds, his new flag-captain, and gave him notice 'that he shall not remain my captain,' a threat which was soon fulfilled.

At last, on 17th January, 1782, the *Formidable* was just able to round Ushant by carrying a press of sail, together with eleven other ships of the line, after fighting their way from Plymouth for a whole week. 'The fate of this Empire is in your hands,' wrote Sandwich in his farewell letter, 'and I have no reason to wish it should be in any other.'

VII

After the disastrous North American campaign in the autumn of 1781, Hood had returned to the West Indies, only to find that de Grasse was also back and planning fresh conquests in concert with Bouillé, who had already captured St. Eustatius.

They now sailed from Martinique to St. Kitts, and landed 8,000 troops, the traitorous inhabitants surrendering at once, while the garrison withdrew to Brimstone Hill. Hood's men were utterly weary and his ships in great need of repair, but he at once sailed north on hearing of this attack, and, by one of the most masterly, tactical manœuvres ever accomplished, lured de Grasse from his anchorage in Frigate Bay, St. Kitts, and occupied it himself. He then landed troops and guns, and attempted to relieve the British garrison, but Bouillé was too strong for them. De Grasse then tried to regain the anchorage, but Hood took up a position such that, with the assistance of the wind, was quite impregnable. Nevertheless, the garrison was forced to surrender on 12th February, and Hood, having left lights burning on the buoys in Frigate Bay to deceive de Grasse, slipped away to Antigua and then sailed for Barbados, where Rodney arrived on 19th February. They met at sea off Antigua, and steered south in the hopes of cutting off de Grasse on his victorious return to Martinique, but he was too quick for them, and slipped into Fort Royal unopposed, having captured Nevis and Montserrat in addition. Rodney and Hood then returned to St. Lucia, and the opening phase of the 1782 campaign came to an end.

Rodney's next duty was to see to the refitting and provisioning of Hood's squadron, which, he told his wife,

'wants everything, and not one morsel of bread amongst them. Government is not to blame—it is the contractor's agents, who, I suppose, have sold it to make a good market.'

'The fleet I found here were in want of everything: there is no villainy some of the merchants of these islands are not guilty of, and they take every opportunity of carrying on a traitorous correspondence with the enemy, supplying them with provisions, etc., etc. Barbados is the worst of them all. They wish to be taken, but the rogues shall be disappointed while I remain here. The island is in no state of defence, and their legislature will not raise one penny to repair fortifications. . . . The inhabitants of Basseterre, St. Christopher's, suffered the enemy to land without firing a single gun, though they had three very good batteries. . . . The merchants of Basseterre put into their capitulation, that the ships coming from England should have leave to land their cargoes unmolested at that island' (St. Kitts); 'they forgot that another person's leave was necessary, when they chose to be French subjects. Not one barrel of provisions will I suffer to pass to that island. They are French, and as French I will treat them. The French, in want of everything, were glad to catch at that article, in hopes by that means to supply themselves with the provisions destined for St. Christopher's. It is indifferent to the merchants who are the purchasers, provided that they get their price. I hear they intend to petition me. I shall treat them as they deserve, if they do, for I hate traitors.'

It was these same double-faced men of business who had recently brought their claims against Rodney before Parliament, and whose cause Edmund Burke had prostituted his talent to espouse.

Rodney was equally incensed by the tame surrender of his pet acquisition, St. Eustatius. 'Count Dillon tells the whole story to every person, and that the Marquis de Bouillé and the three hundred soldiers that landed expected nothing but being prisoners of war. All their boats were stove in ten thousand pieces, all their ammunition wet, and not one firelock capable of going off. On firing the morning gun, the enemy concluded it was an alarm, and were ready to lay down their arms upon the first demand. They took courage upon their not being attacked, marched up to the fort, and rushed in with their bayonets. . . . I am of opinion that the great events which must decide the empire of the ocean will be either off Jamaica or St. Domingo.'

For some time both Rodney and Hood had been certain that Jamaica was the next French objective, and, at a time when our empire was so small and Chatham had stated that the wealth of St. Lucia equalled that of Canada, Rodney was quite justified in thinking that the loss of Jamaica would mean the end of the British Empire in the Atlantic.

De Grasse had thirty-three of the line at Fort Royal, while Rodney at St. Lucia had thirty-six, but the French inferiority was easily counterbalanced by the possibility of powerful assistance from Spain. Nine ships of the line were lying at Havana with a large body of troops, and in March they crossed to Cap François, the French base in San Domingo, where they were joined by a reinforcement of four more of the line just out from Cadiz, carrying 4,000 troops. All they had to do was to wait at Cap François till de Grasse joined them, and then pounce on Jamaica. De Grasse reckoned on being able to bring another 10,000 troops from the French islands, so that the success of the attack was assured.

Rodney's only chance was to defeat de Grasse before he reached Cap François.

Luckily the French islands were in such need of provisions that de Grasse took some time to collect enough for his fleet, and, besides, he was in hopes of yet further reinforcements from home. The second phase of the campaign was Rodney's attempt to prevent these reinforcements arriving. Being warned on 8th March that they had been about to sail from Brest at the beginning of February, he took the fleet to sea with the object of cruising to the south-east of Martinique. Hood strongly objected, pointing out that the French were more likely to come round the north side of the island, and urging that the fleet should be in two divisions so as to be able to cruise to windward off both approaches.

The fleet got to sea on 16th March, and cruised off the Point des Salines, the southernmost tip of Martinique, but on the 20th Hood 'rejoiced most exceedingly' on receiving fresh orders which allowed him to take his own division up to a position 'fifteen to twenty leagues to windward of the *north* end of Martinique, stretching as far north as the latitude of Dominica.' Rodney added that he would cruise with his own division to windward 'of the body of the island of Martinique,' Drake with his division to windward of Point des Salines, and Commodore Affleck with three ships to windward of Guadeloupe. Single ships were to be stationed between the divisions to link them up, and others further to windward to give warning of the enemy's approach.

All ordinary lines of approach to Martinique were thus effectually barred. 'But at 8 a.m. on the 22nd,' wrote Hood, 'not more than thirty hours after I got his cruising arrangement, he sent me the letter No. 2, which I trouble you with to show the unsteadiness of the man.' By this

new order he withdrew Hood from the north and ordered him to close on the centre division. But on 28th March they heard 'as I feared, foretold and laboured to prevent, the French armament got safe to Fort Royal by making Deseada and running down between Dominica and Martinique. . . . Every scheme in my humble opinion should have been had recourse to,' added Hood, 'and every risk have been encountered for intercepting the Brest armament; having fortunately effected that, the greatest difficulty would have been surmounted; but, turn one's eye now which way one will, difficulties, and those in the extreme, stare us in the face. How Sir George Rodney could bring himself to keep his whole force to guard one path, when half of it was fully equal to the service, and to leave another (which appeared to me the most probable the enemy would take) without any guard at all, is a matter for the utmost astonishment to me. I have fretted myself ill; for nothing short of a miracle can now retrieve the nation's affairs in these seas.'

Hood's outburst appears to have been justified, for Rodney not only left the French an easy avenue of approach, but one which they might have been expected to take so as to avoid passing near St. Lucia. His fears that de Grasse might take the opportunity to come out in force were counterbalanced by the ease with which all the British divisions could have been concentrated, as Hood pointed out. Moreover, in refusing to agree with Hood's opinion that the French might be 'daily expected,' he was almost too late in getting to sea to have stopped them, even supposing that he had been cruising near their line of approach.

Luckily, however, the much dreaded reinforcements only numbered two of the line in addition to the convoy, so that Rodney was still superior by one, and convinced

that he was quite capable of performing the 'miracle' necessary to 'retrieve the nation's affairs.'

Hood was all for sending troops and stores to Jamaica with several more ships of the line, but Rodney rightly refused to dissipate his forces further, and kept his fleet concentrated at St. Lucia. But to Hood he could do nothing right: 'What Sir George Rodney proposes I cannot say, but from what I hear from those who have the goodness to come to me (for I have been confined to my cabin for some days) he seems to have no plan. He told Admiral Drake yesterday (2nd April) he would go to windward, that de Grasse might not know where he was; and to others almost in the same breath that he would push to Jamaica directly. "Well, but, Sir George," says a pretty shrewd captain of my division, then present, "suppose de Grasse should think the force already in the neighbourhood of Jamaica equal to the conquest of the island, aided by a body of troops he very possibly has sent, or may send, and remains in force at Fort Royal; what will become of all these islands?" His answer was in his accustomed off-hand strain: "Oh, damn these islands; Jamaica is of ten times more consequence than all of them put together." His manner of talking, is to be sure, very extravagant and extraordinary, but without much meaning.' The ordinary reader might imagine, however, that Rodney's meaning was clear enough.

Later, in his letter to Middleton, Hood says that he has just had a visit from Rodney of two hours, in which 'I never found him more rational. . . . But there is, I am sorry to say it, no great reliance to be placed in a man who is so governed by whim and caprice.'

Hood, of course, was a fine sailor and a masterful character—too masterful, in fact, to be the ideal

second-in-command; and, even if Rodney had lost some of his powers for quick decision, Hood was himself not far off a nervous breakdown. Whatever opinion Rodney may have had of Hood personally, he generally paid him the compliment of asking for and listening to his advice, even if he did not always accept it.

At last, on 5th April, all doubts were solved by the arrival of some deserters from Martinique, who said that de Grasse had embarked 9,000 troops in transports and would sail on the 8th to join the Spaniards at Cap François. De Grasse wished to reach Cap François without fighting, but this was almost impossible, as he was encumbered by the principal home-bound convoy of the year, then gathered in Fort Royal harbour, in addition to the transports and victuallers for his own expedition. He began to put to sea late on 7th April, but was immediately sighted by the British frigates, one of which reported to Rodney the same night. By eight o'clock next morning the whole French armada was at sea, but by noon the British fleet was clear of St. Lucia and carrying a press of sail. Rodney's ships, sailing at their fastest, and guided by their frigates, soon began to catch up on the French, who were hampered by their convoy and had to take their time from the slowest.

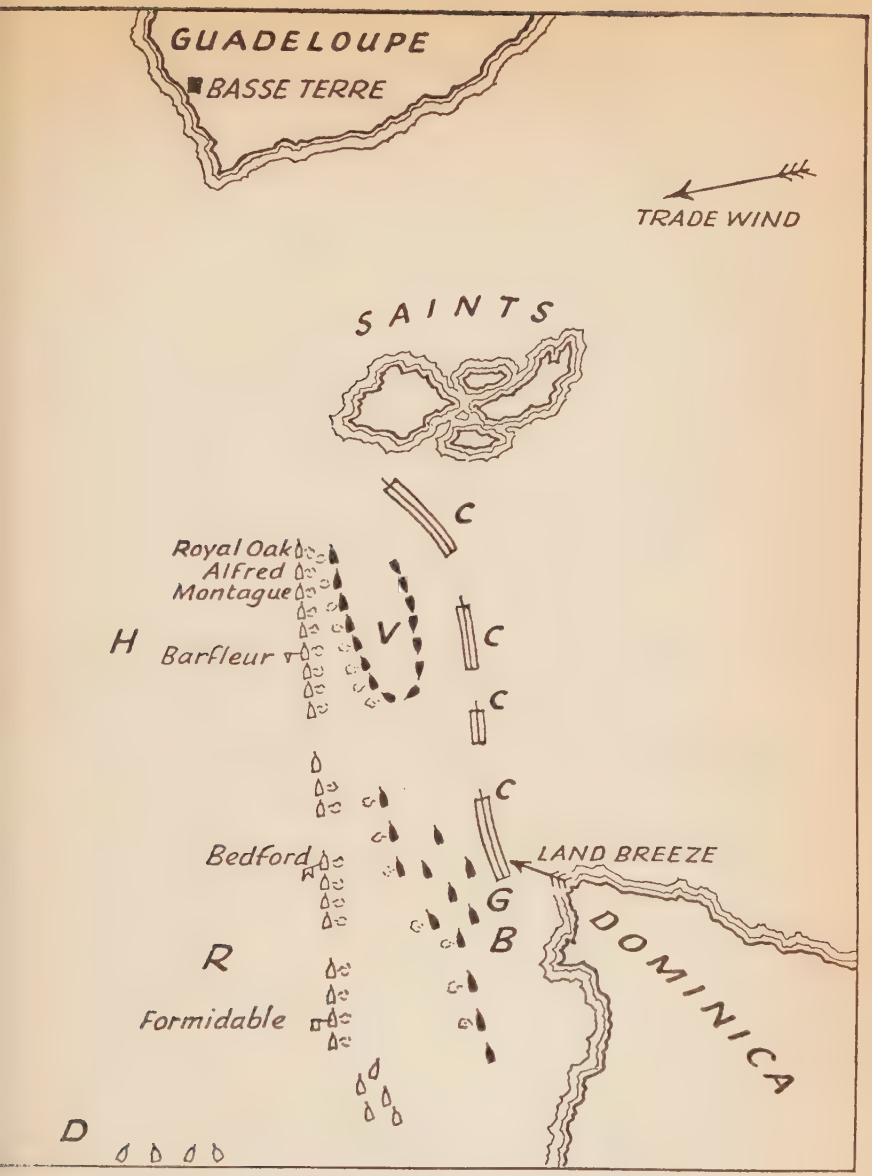
By the evening of the 8th the French could be seen from the masthead by some of the main body, and early next morning they were plainly visible from the deck of the *Formidable*, about six miles away to the north-east. Owing to having shaped their course close in to Dominica, about half the convoy was lying becalmed on the lee side of the island, though the other half, together with the fleet, was well clear to the north.

Hood, whose division was leading, pressed forward with the aid of a slight land-breeze to attack the lagging

merchantmen. But the breeze also helped the French to draw away, de Grasse signalling to the whole convoy to run for shelter to Basseterre (Guadeloupe). Still Hood pressed on, with only eight ships, all the rest of the fleet being still becalmed under Dominica, and suddenly de Grasse saw his chance. Turning his whole fleet about, he steered south to overwhelm Hood by a sudden concentration and at the same time to cover the retreat of his convoy. He ran down till his leading ships were nearly in touch with Rodney and the main body, and then signalled to the Marquis de Vaudreuil to go about in succession with his division and three other ships and turn up to attack Hood.

It was a priceless opportunity, but de Vaudreuil contented himself with a long distance cannonade, and then turned south again in the wake of de Grasse. On getting in touch with the main body, he once more turned in succession to the north and began another cannonade, while de Grasse followed him round, and some of the British centre worked their way into action. This time the fighting was at close quarters ; the *Royal Oak* and *Montague* were badly damaged, and Captain Bayne of the *Alfred* was mortally wounded, while on the French side the *Caton* had to steer away disabled to Guadeloupe. After some further manœuvres the fleets brought to for the night, off the north end of Dominica, about seven miles apart, the French still being to windward.

De Grasse had missed a unique opportunity, for, had he boldly pushed between Hood's squadron and the main body, the advanced British ships would have been completely isolated, as Rodney was practically becalmed and could have given them no assistance. Instead, he only permitted de Vaudreuil's division to engage Hood in two half-hearted skirmishes. ' Had de Grasse known



Action on 9th April, 1782. Situation at Noon.

H = Hood's division isolated and outnumbered.
V = De Vaudreuil heading north to engage Hood a second time.
R = Rodney's division coming up to support Hood.
G and B = De Grasse and de Bougainville covering their convoy and heading north again to join de Vaudreuil.
C = French convoy heading for Basseterre.
D = Drake's division trying to get into action.

his duty,' commented Hood, 'he might have cut us up, by pouring a succession of fresh ships upon us as long as he pleased.' But de Grasse had no intention of committing himself even to a partial action if he could possibly avoid it, until he had increased his force by effecting a junction with the Spaniards.

On the morning of 10th April, therefore, he began to edge towards the wind, with the object of passing to the east of Guadeloupe, hoping to draw Rodney after him and then double back towards San Domingo by passing between Antigua and Montserrat. Rodney stood after him all day under a stiff sail, and intended to have kept on all night under plain sail, but through some confusion in the staff work and signalling the fleet lay to for several hours. Consequently de Grasse drew away, and on the morning of the 11th only the tail-end of his fleet could be seen from the masthead of the leading British ships.

Another mistake of the same kind and de Grasse would soon be clear. But just at the moment when the chances of a general action were becoming less and less, a collision which had taken place during the night caused the *Zélé* to drop astern of the French fleet, together with the *Magnanime*, which had lost a topmast. Meanwhile, the *Jason*, which had hit the *Zélé*, was taking shelter at Basseterre (Guadeloupe). Rodney, of course, signalled 'general chase' to catch the stragglers, and, though several of his ships split their sails through over-eagerness, the *Agamemnon* soon got up quite close to the *Zélé* and *Magnanime*. De Grasse was at this moment passing to the east of the little group of islands called the Saints, which lie five to ten miles south of Guadeloupe, and two courses lay open to him; he could either press on and hope that the sacrifice of the *Zélé* and *Magnanime* would delay Rodney's pursuit, or he could put about and come

down to their assistance. In any case, he had lost the active assistance of three ships. He instantly decided to rescue the *Zélé* and *Magnanime*; the *Jason* having got clear away.

Rodney, seeing the French turn towards him, recalled his chasers and closed up his fleet, but neither admiral desired a night action, and the battle was left to be fought next morning, the 12th of April. During the night the *Zélé* again collided, this time hitting de Grasse's flagship, the *Ville de Paris*, and losing her bowsprit and foremast. Next morning she was a wreck, and had to be taken in tow by a frigate. As it grew lighter Rodney shaped his course to the north-east and detached four ships to cut off the *Zélé*, while de Grasse, in his eagerness to protect her, bore down to the south-west, and so nearly lost the advantage of the wind.

Both fleets were now approaching each other on opposite tacks in line ahead formation, between the Saints and the north of Dominica; Rodney still had his thirty-six of the line, having recalled his chasers, while de Grasse was now reduced to thirty. Drake's division had been placed in the van since 9th April to allow Hood's division to do some refitting after their action on that day. The French van was commanded by de Bougainville, barrister, diplomatist and soldier, who had helped to defend Quebec against Wolfe and had sailed round the world.

The greatest excitement prevailed in the British fleet as the marine drummers beat to quarters. The officers' cabins were dismantled and their furniture and belongings stowed below. Sails and boats were soused with water to prevent fire; wet sand was strewn on the decks, wet blankets, cloths and frieze-screens were placed round the hatchways and the magazine hatches. The guns

were cast loose, their tompions removed, and were then run out of their ports; while their whole armoury of crows, handspikes and rammers were laid ready and powder-boxes were brought up from the gunner's stores. Sir Charles Douglas's innovations were to have a thorough test.

It was now nearly eight o'clock in the morning, the wind was due east, and both fleets were so disposed that the two leading ships were almost equidistant from the point of intersection of their lines of advance. Each fleet was sailing as close to the wind as possible, so that whichever reached the point of intersection first would be able to retain the wind and so 'weather' the other fleet, which would thus be forced to edge away to leeward, unless they intended to break through the enemy's line.

De Grasse's line was ragged, several of his leading ships being too much to windward, but the *Hercule* just managed to cross the *Marlborough's* bows, and so won the race for the weather gauge. The *Marlborough*, therefore, altered course to port to come parallel with the French, and the rest of the fleet followed in succession, opening fire as they drew level.

An action between fleets passing on opposite tacks seldom resulted in anything decisive, so that Rodney probably looked on this cannonade only as a preliminary. The *Formidable* was fired on by the leading ship of the French centre, but Rodney 'did not return it, the distance being too great, but began with the next; and by giving some little elevation to his guns, to good effect, still standing in a straight line with full sail and angling in upon the enemy in order to penetrate his line of battle.' It is very unlikely that Rodney at this stage had any idea of breaking the enemy's line, and Douglas's remark in a letter to Middleton is probably an example of wisdom

after the event. All he was doing was to pass as close to the enemy as possible. Moreover, the French van were rapidly running out of range and out of action, until de Grasse signalled them to lead round to starboard and engage the rear of the British fleet on a parallel course.

Rodney was having distinctly the best of the engagement, since it was possible for him to capture the *Zélé* as soon as the fleets had passed each other, while de Grasse in his southerly course was rapidly approaching the calm patch under the lee of Dominica. He tried twice to turn his fleet away from the wind to the westward, but the British line barred the way, and his captains ignored his signals and held on.

Rodney was enjoying himself thoroughly, walking up and down the quarterdeck, and occasionally passing through the great cabin, under the poop, to see what was happening from the stern gallery. He was attended by his secretary, Sir Charles Douglas, Doctor Gilbert Blane, Captain Symonds, and Lieutenant Lord Cranstoun, 'greatly patronised by the Lord Advocate' (Dundas), whom Rodney had already appointed as supernumerary captain of the *Formidable*, preparatory to getting rid of Symonds. Two midshipmen, Dashwood and Yorke, were also in attendance to run messages, and Rodney, seeing some lemons lying on the cabin table, as he passed through, told Dashwood to make him a lemon-squash. In due course Dashwood reappeared, and, having no spoon, ventured to stir the mixture with the hilt of his dirk, before handing it to the great man, who reproved him heavily. 'That may do for the midshipmen's mess. Drink it yourself, and send my steward here.' But the steward could not be found, and Rodney was forced to quarter a lemon himself and suck it.

By nine o'clock the six leading ships of Drake's division

had passed the rear of the French line, while the leading Frenchman was only just level with the rearmost British ship, owing to the greater length of the British line. The *Formidable* had just passed the *Ville de Paris*.

Suddenly the stately procession of floating fortresses was strangely upset, for the breeze, which up to now had been blowing from the east, changed to south-east down at the southern end of the two fleets. This meant that only the lower half of the battle was immediately affected, the distance between the furthest ships being quite six miles. The British ships, receiving the wind from further astern, stood on unhindered, while the French van inclined further to starboard to avoid being held up by it and so drew closer to the British rear. But as the remainder of the French ships came on and felt the breeze blowing more and more on their bows, it became impossible for them to continue their advance. They could turn to port, expose their sterns to be raked by the British broadsides and so retire from the action, or they could turn to starboard and drive right into the British line ; but they could not follow their van on their present course. The whole thing happened so quickly that they were taken quite by surprise, and the *Diadème* in trying to pay off to port away from the British was taken heavily aback and remained stationary, with her sails forced against the masts.

The three ships immediately astern of her were trying to edge off the wind to starboard, and towards the British, but the sudden stoppage ahead obstructed them badly, and they nearly fouled one another. Meanwhile, the ships ahead of the *Diadème* glided slowly onwards, leaving an ever-widening gap in their wake.

The *Formidable* happened to be approaching on the opposite course at this embarrassing moment. She

poured a terrific discharge into the *Glorieux*, the *Diadème's* next ahead, which had already received some heavy punishment and whose captain was dead. The first lieutenant, Trogoff de Kerlessi, ordered the French flag to be nailed to the stump of a broken mast and turned her off the wind towards the British. As the little group on the quarterdeck of the *Formidable* strove to see what was happening through the dense smoke between the lines, the *Glorieux* lurched right alongside of them, while beyond her they could see nothing at all except the dim vision of the *Diadème*. There was a clear space of water between.

Gallons of ink have been employed in dexterous efforts to prove exactly what took place next. Midshipman Dashwood, then aged eighteen, volunteered some very definite statements on the subject at the ripe age of sixty-five, when all the other protagonists were dead and he himself had become a senior officer unaccustomed to contradiction.

It is clear, however, that up to the very last moment Rodney had no intention of piercing the enemy's line, he had made no preliminary signal for any special form of attack, as at Martinique, and he had actually expunged the signal for breaking the line from his fleet signal-book. It was entirely a question of taking a chance in the heat of the action.

Douglas rushed through the great cabin to find Rodney, who had gone to look out of the stern windows, and, pointing to the gap ahead of the *Diadème*, urged him to steer through it. A short discussion followed, while all strained their eyes to see exactly what was happening to the French, and then Rodney ordered the helm to be put over, and the *Formidable* surged through the middle of the French line.

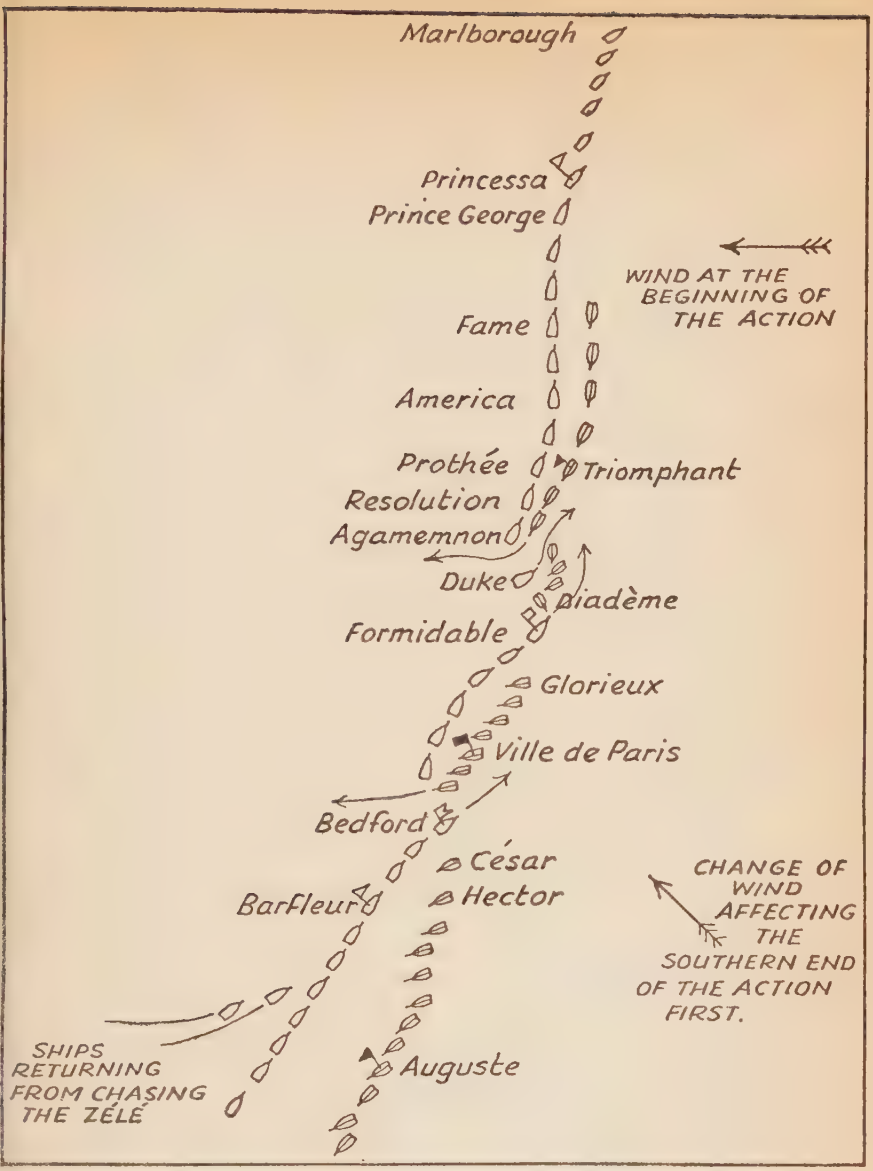
The success of the manœuvre was immediate, the *Formidable* delivering a complete broadside to starboard through the *Glorieux's* exposed stern windows at pistol range, and another to larboard through the bows of the *Diadème*. Rodney had just sent Blane to tell the gunners 'to elevate their metal'[1] and Dashwood to warn the larboard[2] side for action, and as the *Formidable's* two broadsides thundered together the shots tore right through their victims from end to end. As soon as he was through the gap, Rodney resumed his original course, and, turning up the weather side of the French line, let loose at the three ships lying entangled astern of the *Diadème* and unable to make any effective reply. Captains Fanshawe, Inglis, Cornwallis, Dumaresq and Charrington all followed the *Formidable* through the same gap, the last three being probably unaware of what had really happened ahead, owing to the dense smoke.

They all hit the *Glorieux* in succession, and then concentrated on the *Diadème* and the three astern of her. 'This unfortunate group,' wrote Douglas, 'composing now only one large object to fire at . . . all at once receiving several broadsides from each, not a single shot missing, and dreadful must have been the slaughter.' To add to their discomfiture, Captain Alan Gardner,[3] commanding the *Duke*, next ahead of the *Formidable*, also cut through the French line astern of them, and, having given them several broadsides through their sterns, took station again ahead of the commander-in-chief.

[1] i.e. to raise the breech of the gun and so depress the muzzle, thereby causing the shots to go low and hit near the waterline.

[2] The word 'port' was only brought into use to denote the left side of the ship as late as 1849.

[3] See 'Howe.'



Battle of the Saints, 12th April, 1782.

Situation soon after 9 a.m.

Drake's division has passed the French rear and is about to tack and to weather them.

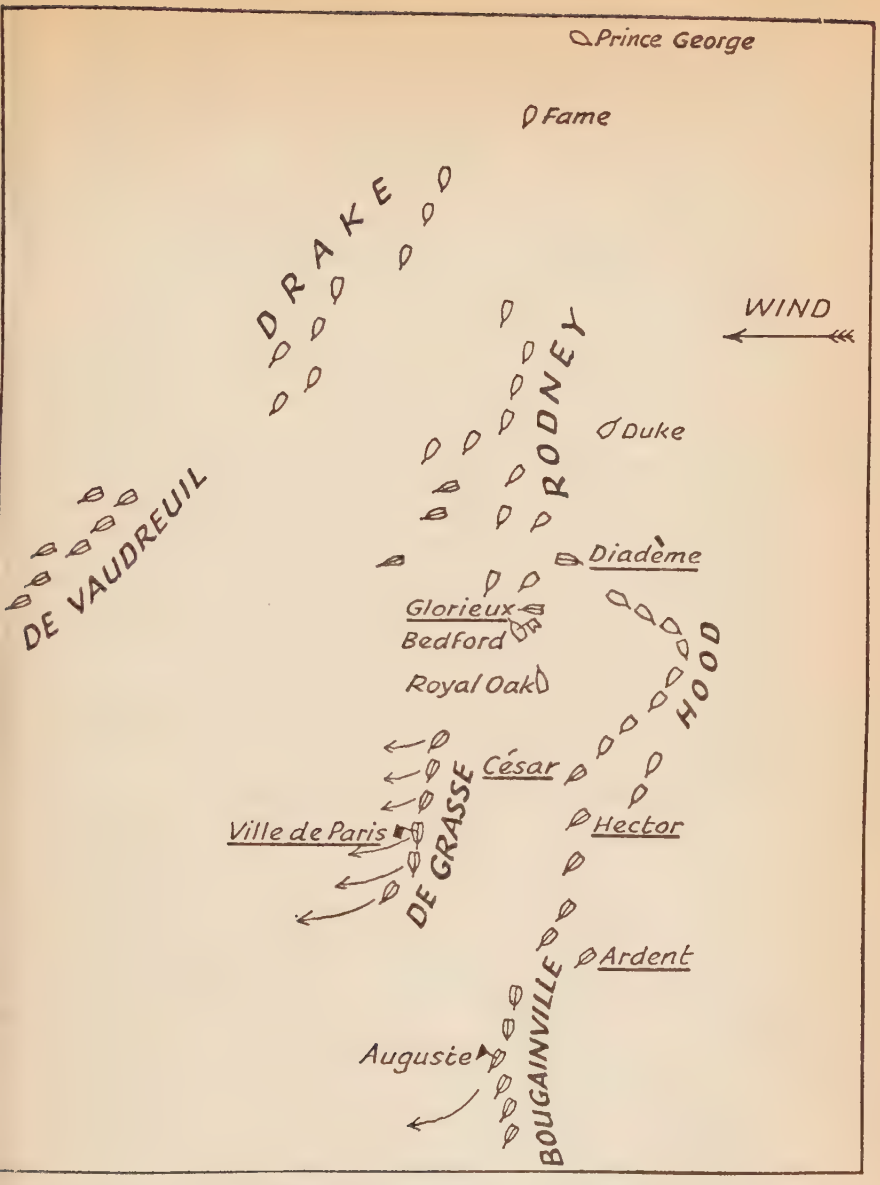
The *Duke*, *Formidable*, and *Bedford* are seen cutting the French line.

The *Bedford*, the last ship in Rodney's division, commanded by Captain Thomas Graves, was flying the broad pendant of Commodore Edmund Affleck. Having passed close to the French ship *César*, nothing could be seen of her next astern owing to the smoke till suddenly three ships appeared to *port*, including the *Ville de Paris*, and Affleck and Graves realised that they had cut the French line without meaning to. They could see nothing of their own next ahead, Charrington's *Ajax*, and they were, of course, entirely ignorant of what was happening to Rodney. The whole of Hood's division followed their lead, and repeated Rodney's stroke by smashing the *César's* stern as they passed. The breeze was dying away, but they were just able to work up the windward side of the French line and begin to gather the harvest, the *Royal Oak* taking possession of the *Glorieux*, now a total wreck.

With his line cut in three places, de Grasse could do little to control the action, but individual groups of French ships were able to run west through the gaps left in the British line, by their own cutting manœuvres.

Bougainville carried the van out of action to the south-west, and de Vaudreuil in the rear, having few immediate opponents, also began to edge away. Rodney could just make out some British ships unengaged away to the north, and signalled them to tack and chase the retreating enemy. Unless he could bring down his van ships quickly, the French would be off.

Drake had stood on well past the rear of the French in order to be in a good position for reaching to windward, and also to give his ships time for a few hasty repairs. They had suffered severely at the start of the action, as had the five ships of Rodney's division which had followed them. The *Prince George* had lost her foremast,



SITUATION AT ABOUT NOON.

The French having passed to leeward through the gaps in the British line are retreating, the centre and van are altering course to westward.

The British Fleet has tacked and is pursuing in three divisions.

The French ships whose names are underlined were sunk or captured.

NOTE : The position of the ships in this plan is conjectural.

the *Fame* was hit below the waterline and nearly sank, the *America*, *Prothée* and *Agamemnon* had lost topmasts, and the Captains of the *Hercules* and *Resolution* were wounded. Drake could not obey Rodney's signal at once owing to damage and lack of wind, but by midday he had got a dozen of them round and was bearing down on de Vaudreuil and de Grasse.

About half an hour after the breeze freshened from the east, and all the sub-divisions of the French fleet began to run before it on parallel courses. Drake's ships chased de Vaudreuil's and de Grasse's, Rodney also chased de Grasse, while Hood chased de Grasse and Bougainville.

The disabled Frenchmen were captured one by one as they dropped astern. The *Glorieux* had already surrendered, having no masts left wherewith to sail, and soon after one the *César*, having received the intensive fire of half the fleet, surrendered to the *Centaur*. The *Hector* held on till well into the afternoon, when the fire of Cornwallis's *Canada* made the crew desert their guns. Her captain, La Vicomté, tried to rally them, but was killed by a shot from the *Alcide*, which came up and took possession of her. The *Prince William* and *Belliqueux*, pushing through the general mêlée, captured the *Ardent*, which had turned up to join de Grasse. The French were now in full flight and the action was dying down, but the *Ville de Paris* was lagging astern. She was engaged in turn by the *Torbay*, *Canada*, *Monarch*, *Marlborough* and *Russell*, but still held on her course. At last, just before sunset, Hood got up to her in the *Barfleur* and began to cross her bows. De Grasse opened a heavy fire, which Hood ' totally disregarded till I had proved by firing a single gun from the quarterdeck that I was well within point blank, when I opened so heavy a fire against him that in ten minutes he struck.'

A relentless pursuit of the remainder of the French seemed to Hood the only logical method of consolidating the victory, but 'my boat,' he told Middleton, 'had scarcely got on board [the *Ville de Paris*] when Sir George made the signal and brought-to, and continued to lay to the whole night. After the glorious business of yesterday, I was most exceedingly disappointed and mortified in the commander-in-chief. In the first instance for not making the signal for a general chase the moment he hauled that down for the line of battle, which was about one o'clock; had he so done, I am confident we should have had twenty sail of the line before dark; instead of that he pursued under his topsails all the afternoon, though the flying enemy had all their sails set their very shattered state would allow. In the next, that he did not continue to pursue under that easy sail, so as never to have lost sight of the enemy in the night. . . . Had I, my dear Sir Charles, had the honour of commanding His Majesty's noble fleet yesterday, I may, without the imputation of vanity, say the flag of England should at this hour have graced the sterns of upwards of twenty sail of the enemy's ships of the line.'

Next morning Hood went on board the *Formidable* and 'lamented' that Rodney had not continued to pursue, 'so as to keep sight of the enemy all night, to which he only answered, "Come, we have done very handsomely as it is."' Hood then tackled Douglas, who replied that 'Sir George chose to pursue in a body.' This aggravated Hood, who saw nothing to prevent the whole fleet pursuing together, and said so at some length, 'upon which he [Douglas] walked off without saying another word. . . . And here we are now in the exact same spot off Guadeloupe.'

Hood then retired to the *Barfleur* full of baffled and

generous indignation and got down to his letters. Sir Charles Douglas, he announced, 'is no more fit for the station he fills than I am to be an Archbishop. . . . I have been witness of his receiving orders that have appeared to my mind to be big with absurdity, and he has gone upon deck to direct their being executed, upon which I have more than once said, "I believe, Sir George, you are unacquainted with some circumstances respecting the orders you have just given to Sir Charles Douglas," which I have related and he has immediately acknowledged it, sent for Sir Charles, and asked him why he had not made known what he had just heard from me, which makes the orders he has received highly improper, and they have been put a stop to. Now, what I did was most certainly the *bounden* duty of a *first* captain. But all is confusion on board the *Formidable*, and not the least degree of attention to a regularity of system and order. Things that are of the greatest consequence to be done as expeditiously as possible are neglected, and others of a trifling nature there is often the greatest hurry about. . . . In short, I am not only witness to this unpleasant and distressing conduct, but am teased about it as often as a captain comes to me. . . . Sir George Rodney requires a monitor constantly at his elbow, as much as a froward child. My health has suffered very much from seeing things go as they do, for I am of that frame and texture that I cannot be indifferent where the service of my King and country is so materially affected. I must, however, endeavour to do it, or I shall soon be tossed overboard. . . .'

'So soon as the *Ville de Paris* had struck, Sir George's faculties seem to have been benumbed, further than respected that ship *alone*.' 'Had it been my lot, my dear friend,' Hood told Jackson, 'to have commanded His

Majesty's fleet on the 12th, and have passed by so clear and very favourable an opportunity of raising the glory of my country, as I am grieved to say *was done*, I should have thought my head would have been justly required for such a glaring and shameful neglect . . . sooner than undergo for a continuance what I have so painfully done for several weeks past, I would be content to be placed on a Welsh mountain to gather buttons as they drop from a goat's tail.'

Hood's mordant gibes were certainly justified, for five captains ignored Rodney's signals and chased the French throughout the night, led by Commodore Affleck, who did not rejoin till late the next evening.

It is easy to understand Rodney's solicitude for the *Ville de Paris*, the capture of the enemy's commander-in-chief being a stroke which would label the action for all time as a decisive victory. By the time this was done he had undoubtedly reached the limit of his physical endurance. He had had nothing since early morning but a lemon, and had spent the whole day walking or sitting on his quarterdeck, directing the greatest fleet action there had been for over seventy years. To Hood's entreaties he could only murmur his satisfaction at what had already been accomplished. Hood, too, must have been nearly collapsing with fatigue, but he had just enough left in him for one more effort; but Rodney, in a sudden fit of nervous reaction after his great success, would not consent.

Between these two weary Titans stood Sir Charles Douglas, trying to satisfy them both. From various indications Hood's censures on him as a staff officer appear to have been well founded, but it was undoubtedly his personal supervision of the fleet's gunnery system which gave it such a distinct superiority over the fewer but more heavily armed Frenchmen. Captain Symonds

also experienced great difficulty in pleasing his masters, and was probably quite glad to have been superseded by Lord Cranstoun.

Seven years afterwards Rodney wrote a reasoned defence of his refusal to pursue, in which he emphasised the damage done to his own ships and the danger of their having lost touch during the night and being defeated in detail next day by the French, who went off ' in a close connected body.' Alternately, the French might have led away his chasing with false lights, and then have doubled back to windward in the dark and recaptured the *Ville de Paris* and the other prizes. The British, in that case, would have been so far to leeward that it would have taken them several days beating back against wind to regain their position, during which time Antigua, Barbados and St. Lucia might have been lost.

The French, however, were in no condition for further fighting, and their ' close connected body ' was a routed mob, which might have been easily watched by frigates through the night and captured next morning. Besides, this defence makes no attempt to answer Hood's charge of being too slow in pursuit before the *Ville de Paris* was captured.

The sole defence for Rodney's conduct was that, when once the French line was broken and their defeat assured, he became physically incapable of any further initiative. He had had no sleep for four nights.

VIII

Rodney sent three ships and two prizes to Jamaica the next day, but he himself stayed off Guadeloupe till the 17th, being still anxious for the safety of the Windward Islands.

When he did at last steer for Jamaica, Hood was sent ahead with his division, to act as a screen for the prizes until they cleared the southernmost tip of San Domingo.

Ignoring the prizes and their escort, Hood dashed straight for the Mona Passage, between San Domingo and Porto Rico, 'the only chance I had of intercepting any stragglers of the *flying* enemy.' He was there by 19th April, but de Vaudreuil, with sixteen of the line and ten frigates, just got through to Cap François before him. 'It is a very mortifying circumstance to relate to you, sir,' he sorrowfully informed Rodney, 'that the French fleet which you put to flight on the 12th (twenty-six in number, including frigates) went through the Mona Passage on the 18th, the day before I was in it.'

Bougainville had also made good his retreat to Curaçao with six of the line. But Hood received an unexpected reward for his indignant vigour, for on 19th April he sighted a French squadron trying to slip past the western edge of Porto Rico. They were chased and captured after some sharp fighting in shoal water, and proved to be the *Caton* and *Jason*, refitted, from Basseterre, together with *l'Aimable*, 'a very fine large coppered frigate . . . and a very elegant little coppered ship, late His Majesty's sloop *Ceres*.'

When Hood rejoined Rodney, he was given twenty-five of the line wherewith to watch Cap François, while Rodney took the worst damaged ships and the prizes into Port Royal Harbour, Jamaica. Here he received his first public congratulations, which were of a particularly flattering nature, the House of Assembly, the principal planters and the magistrates of Kingston all testifying their 'loyalty to our most gracious Sovereign' and their 'zeal for the public service'; adding that, 'in so unnatural a civil war and the combination of so

many powerful kingdoms, to you the glory must be ascribed of having conspicuously supported the honour of the British flag.' He was greeted as a mighty conqueror and fêted with banquets and public receptions. In the harbour lay the spoils of the battle, increased by the captures made by Hood. The *Diadème* had sunk towards the end of the action, and the *César* was fired by 'a rascal of a marine corporal,' who set the rum on fire while 'drawing off a can, with a lighted candle in his hand.' The ship then blew up, and her French crew and British prize crew were burnt to death, drowned, or eaten by sharks, which tore men from pieces of wreckage to which they were clinging.

Nevertheless, the surviving prizes were a fine spectacle to gloat over, and Rodney's despatch to the Admiralty was couched in his most pontifical tones. It began: 'It has pleased God out of His Divine Providence to grant to his Majesty's arms a most complete victory over the fleet of his enemy.'

To his wife he wrote with charming modesty, mentioning that the pictures of his 'dearest girls' during the action 'took care of my wine in the store-room, and seemed quite refreshed after their fatiguing duty. All the French officers are in love with them, particularly Count de Grasse.' But he was very anxious about his peerage, 'the highest ambition a subject can aspire to.'

Once the refitting started, he was back at his favourite occupation, stimulating and abusing the efforts of the Port Royal dockyard, 'suffered to go almost to total ruin.' The store-keepers and officials, by living outside the yard in Kingston, 'occasion a great loss of time'; 'the hospital will only hold three hundred sick.' 'Ever since my arrival here, the neglect has been so great, and my reprehensions so many, notwithstanding which,

though provisions have been demanded for ships in the squadron lately under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir Peter Parker, which were ordered to go on immediate service for the defence of the island, more than a fortnight has elapsed since the demand was made.' The buoys which he had placed to mark the shoals in 1774 'have been suffered to go to total decay,' although he left 'particular orders to keep the said buoys in repair.' 'The Master Attendant here has shamefully neglected to secure a sufficient number of pilots. . . . In short, everything relative to His Majesty's dockyard here appears to me as if designed to go to ruin.'

And, later, to his wife he writes in triumph, 'I have roused them, and made them active in spite of themselves, or out they must go.'

'Do not let people imagine I am coming home. It may offend, where I would not have it, even by report. I have been here seven days, and have not set my foot on shore, for I hate being pestered with addresses.' 'P.S.—I send you a song made by a common seaman. He must be a gentleman's son. I have it to be enquired into.'

When Hood reached Port Royal on 21st May, Rodney took the opportunity 'to go sick,' and left him in charge of the refitting. In work of this kind he was just as good a slave-driver as Rodney, and, by keeping the dockyard workers at it for fourteen hours a day, and by paying them double, he soon got some of the ships repaired. But he could not forget the vision of the lost victory on 'the 12th.' 'Oh, my dear Sir Charles,' he wrote to Middleton, 'had Sir George done what he might and ought, we should all most probably have been peaceably at home by our firesides, in the course of another year! How he can stand the reproaches of his own mind, if

he is not perfectly callous, for doing so little, when a vast deal of honour and glory might so easily have been gathered for his poor country, almost a bankrupt in both, I cannot reconcile.'

Referring again to Douglas, he wrote: 'How, in God's name, could the commander-in-chief pick up such a first captain? I will venture to say the list of the Royal Navy does not produce one more unequal altogether to the duties of the station. He is totally unqualified; has no method whatever; puzzles at everything, and orders and counter-orders perpetually. . . . I believe him a very good-natured, worthy, brave man, but he is certainly in a character he is totally unfit for.'

By June he was accusing Rodney of malingering on shore in perfect health, on the strength of information from Captain Symonds, now in the *Warrior*, who probably spoke with bias.

By July he was still hard at work in the dockyard, and thankful that a broken shin prevented his attendance at a dinner got up for Rodney by the merchants of Kingston at a cost of £1,500 'raised by subscription from Jew, Turk, etc. . . . It would be much more for the credit of both parties to have the subscription money laid out in necessaries for the poor seamen who stood much in need of assistance and attention; but the vanity of the one and the very inordinate passion for feasting of the other were strong bars against my advice taking effect.'

Meanwhile, Rodney had had no official communication from home since leaving St. Lucia. There were rumours, of course, but nothing definite to go on; so, feeling that he 'had done very handsomely' for the present, he decided to wait at Jamaica for further orders. They arrived on 10th July with dramatic suddenness, in the shape of Admiral Hugh Pigot, with orders to

command-in-chief in the West Indies and to hand Rodney his recall.

In March, Lord North's Government, being unable any longer to withstand the growing censures on its incompetent direction of the war, had resigned, and Lord Rockingham and the Whigs had formed an administration, with Admiral Keppel as First Lord. He was, of course, the Whig hero of the scandalous political court-martial following the battle off Ushant. For his Sea Lords he chose Admiral Sir Robert Harland, who had been his second-in-command on that occasion, and Vice-Admiral Hugh Pigot, who had virtually retired since 1770, but was a good Whig, and both were promoted to admiral.

According to the civilian Ministers, the first business of the new Board was to review the various stations and commands and consider what officers there were with Tory sympathies whose services they could advantageously dispense with. Rodney had already come under the political censure of the Rockingham Whigs for his conduct at St. Eustatius, while his real merits were overshadowed by the unpopularity of the Ministry to whom he owed his appointment.

No news had reached England of his doings for some weeks past, and all the Government knew was that St. Eustatius had been recaptured by Bouillé, and that St. Kitts, Montserrat and Nevis had been taken by de Grasse.

Rodney's temper and hauteur had raised up a mass of enemies against him in the fleet, whose letters home bore whispers of every form of incompetence and stupidity.

The British fleet in the West Indies was now a strong one, and there must be plenty of prizes to be picked up, and Pigot was quite willing to go there himself, convinced

apparently that he was well able to exercise the command. He had never hoisted his flag.

Besides being a gross injustice to Rodney to supersede him without waiting to hear the results of his spring campaign, it was also somewhat derogatory to Hood, who had shown himself a complete master of West Indian strategy. But his lack of seniority made it impossible to give him what was the most important command at the moment.

As Pigot was sailing from Plymouth on 17th May in the *Jupiter*, Lord Cranstoun was carrying Rodney's despatch along the road to London. Keppel had it by 2 a.m. on the 18th, and sent a King's Messenger galloping to Plymouth to stop Pigot and send Rodney his congratulations. The messenger averaged eight miles an hour to Plymouth, but he did not arrive till the next morning. No one thought of sending a sloop or swift frigate to fetch Pigot back.

IX

The new Ministers, finding that their supposed whipping boy had become the public idol, hastened to make generous amends, while the late Ministers grew hoarse with insisting that it was the officer of their selection who had saved Jamaica.

On 22nd May, four days after Lord Cranstoun reached London, both Houses of Parliament passed votes of thanks to Rodney 'for his able and gallant conduct,' and to the other flag-officers, captains and officers 'for their bravery and gallant conduct,' while the 'seamen, marines and soldiers' were to have the satisfaction of knowing that Parliament 'doth highly approve and acknowledge' their services.

Jane Rodney described to him in a letter the excitement caused by Lord Cranstoun's arrival; notes from Lord Keppel and Mr. Stephens[1] at eight in the morning, and soon after 'all London was in an uproar; the whole town was illuminated that night; we were at the play. When we went in, the whole house testified by their claps and huzzas the joy they felt at the news, and their love for you; their acclamations lasted for, I am sure, five minutes. You may judge how happy we were.' It is a pity to have to remember that much of this applause was of a partisan nature.

'I cannot help thinking,' wrote Sandwich, now out of office, 'that the Administration will be so pelted in Parliament, and in the papers, for having superseded you, that they will be forced to revoke their measure; but, whatever happens in that respect, I am sure that your being recalled in the height of your glory will be the most fortunate event that ever happened to anyone; for you will retire from the service in the moment that your reputation is at the highest, and by that means you will put it out of the chance of war, or sinister events, to lower your credit.'

Sandwich was right, the new Ministers were fiercely attacked, the late Ministers being able to show that Rodney had performed the unparalleled feat of capturing a Spanish, a Dutch and a French admiral all in the space of two years, and also of taking the *Ville de Paris*, a ship of 100 guns. The new Ministers, however, pleaded that 'no disgrace was intended' in recalling Rodney, but 'only an act of authority, which Ministers, who were responsible, had a right to exercise.' The Opposition still fumed and grumbled, but finally compromised on a vote for a memorial to be placed in Westminster Abbey to the three

[1] The Secretary of the Admiralty.

captains who were killed or died of wounds in the campaign.

Next day there was another tussle over Rodney's peerage. Sandwich boldly demanded that he should receive an earldom, instancing his own ancestor, Admiral Montague, who, although a commoner, 'was made immediately and at once an earl for his services, also Master of the Wardrobe, and had a pension granted his family for ever, of four thousand a year.' After much unseemly haggling, the Opposition's generous proposals were whittled down to a barony of Great Britain, and Rodney took his title from Rodney Stoke in Somerset. The Duke of Chandos, who owned the Rodney Stoke property, had already informed Lady Rodney that they might have it on reasonable terms, but his offer was not accepted.

Another debate took place in June on the proposal made by Sir Francis Basset, a strong supporter of the late Government, for 'such pecuniary remuneration' to accompany the peerage 'as would enable the person holding that rank to support it with dignity and splendour.' Eventually a pension of £2,000 a year was voted Rodney on the Irish establishment for his own life and that of his wife and children.

The House, with greater but invidious generosity, voted Hood an Irish barony, and Drake and Affleck baronetcies of Great Britain.

Rodney sailed home in the *Montague*, and reached Bristol in September, where he was greeted with the most extraordinary enthusiasm. He was accommodated free of charge at the Bush Inn, received the freedom of the city, and was subjected to the exertion of being drawn through the streets in a triumphal car, preceded by sheriffs, javelin men, boats on wheels, bands of music,

banners and symbols innumerable. After a hectic day he managed to escape to Bath, and from thence to Purbrook, near Portsmouth, where he joined his family the same evening.

Cities and boroughs showered their freedoms and gold boxes upon him, and the merchants engaged in the Guinea slave trade anxiously sought his opinion with regard to its proposed prohibition. He answered their questionnaire with characteristic vigour, inveighing against 'people in England who, under a pretence of religion and love of liberty, are attempting to delude the minds of the nation in general by petitioning the legislature of their country to deprive the State of one of the most valuable branches of the national commerce.' The slaves, he affirmed, were always well treated, were never despondent, and were irreplaceable by white labour.

But, when the enthusiasm over his victory had died down and the treaties of 1783 had brought the general excitement of the war to an end, the wretched business of St. Eustatius was brought up again. The parliamentary committee of enquiry had been discharged as soon as Rodney reached England, but the merchants were able to carry on their campaign against him by individual suits in the Admiralty Courts. Sixty-four claims were made against him, 'and to an amount, as stated in such claims, far exceeding the whole of the captured property.' Various attempts were made to get the suits transferred from the Admiralty Courts to the Courts of Common Law, but these were prevented by a special appeal decision of the House of Lords. In no case was Rodney forced to pay any direct compensation; but in some of them orders for restitutions were made, which meant that the prize money available for distribution was

considerably reduced. He was, however, put to immense expense and anxiety in defending the suits, and having his interests properly represented and safeguarded. He was soon reduced to 'an honourable poverty.'

Moreover, he was unlucky to incur the enmity of Pitt by espousing somewhat strongly the claims of the Prince of Wales to the Regency in 1789, when George III became insane.

Being bred a royalist, as he declared, he was in agreement with those who argued that the Prince of Wales could assume the office of Regent without any restriction or supervision by Parliament. Pitt opposed this view on constitutional grounds, and refused to allow Captain John Rodney a guardship as a punishment for the attitude assumed by his father. This, however, was little hardship, as John Rodney had been made a post-captain at fifteen by his father's influence and had received countless outrageous favours. To the modern mind the victimisation and the nepotism appear equally discreditable.

Rodney was never the same man after his great effort on 12th April. He lived quietly at Purbrook, making occasional visits to Bath ; but he was for ever tormented by chronic gout, while his general physical and mental condition rapidly declined. He offered his services to the Admiralty in 1787 on the score of a war with France ; but it was scarcely more than a veteran's gesture of loyalty, and was politely acknowledged as such by Pitt.

Meanwhile, he was still irritated by the business of St. Eustatius, and later by Pitt's disfavour. He died in 1792 while on a visit to his son, Colonel Rodney, in a house at the corner of Princes Street and Hanover Square.

Sandwich's observations on the fortunate moment of his recall were well meant, but it might seem to the world that he would have been a greater and a happier man if he had died while returning home in triumph, like Blake, or like Nelson, in the hour of victory.

SIR SIDNEY SMITH

SIR SIDNEY SMITH

I

OF all the remarkable events of the long French Wars, none, with the exception of Trafalgar and Waterloo, provoked such widespread national enthusiasm as the defeat of Buonaparte at Acre by an English post-captain. Moreover, the man himself was one of the most extraordinary personalities who has ever seen fit 'to choose the Navy as a career' at the mature age of eleven. Smith would have been considered fantastic and even eccentric in whatever profession he had adorned, but in the Navy, of all professions, the course of this meteor was watched with amazement, envy and shocked propriety.

There was nothing, however, in his parentage to suggest abilities which would render him too intelligent for His Majesty's service. On the contrary, his father and grandfather were placid men of war, and his mother was the daughter of a self-willed and 'opulent merchant of London,' Mr. Pinkney Wilkinson. Smith was born in 1764 and 'educated' at Tonbridge and at a school at Bath, by which it is to be understood that he was initiated into certain philological rites in connection with Ovid, Cæsar, Virgil, Sallust and Horace, whose reactions even on boys intellectually distinguished in after-life have often been less than beneficial. In 1777 Smith was sent to sea, when just thirteen, and became a midshipman in the *Tortoise* and *Unicorn* successively on the North American coast. In 1779 his ship returned to England, and after

some delay he was appointed to the *Sandwich*, Captain Walter Young, flying the flag of Sir George Brydges Rodney. In her he was fortunate enough to be present at the Moonlight Battle and the succeeding campaign of Martinique, of which he wrote, 'I wish everybody that calls Sir George Rodney's temper and *judgement* in question had been in the fleet those thirteen days to windward of Martinique, in *chase* of the enemy's superior fleet.' In the same letter he remarked that 'Any books you think proper can be packed up in a box and sent by any officer of a man-of-war you are acquainted with; be sure to send me out some newspapers in return for *my* news, that I may know what *you* are doing and how you like what *we* do.'

Thus the future sailor-statesman showed his sensitiveness of public opinion on public affairs at the scatter-brained age of sixteen. Shortly after this he was promoted lieutenant, and appointed to the *Alcide*. 'As for his [Rodney] giving me a command,' he wrote, 'I am too young: . . . *perhaps* he may recollect in answer to my being too young, when he thinks of it, that I am as old as, and have been to sea much longer than, his son, who is a post-captain; he is very whimsical, and such a whim may take him, if he was reminded by somebody else besides me.' Doubtless some of the senior midshipmen and lieutenants, aged forty and over, thought the same thing.

The *Alcide* was third ship in the line at the disastrous cannonade in Chesapeake Bay, 5th September, 1781, and she was also in Rear-Admiral Drake's division at the Battle of the Saints and under Hood in his Frigate Bay campaign.

Immediately after the Saints, Rodney made Smith commander of the *Fury* sloop (16), and on 18th October, 1782, he was promoted to post-captain and given the *Alcméne*

SIR SIDNEY SMITH
(AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-NINE)

From the stipple engraving by Anthony Cardon after the picture by Sir Robert Ker Porter.

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(32), which he paid off at Woolwich in 1784, after the peace.

He had now reached very nearly the highest rank in the Navy, and was not yet twenty. He had been present at all the most important engagements of the war, and had seen more active service in eight years than most captains ever saw in a lifetime. The system of eighteenth-century promotion by which interest and patronage were allowed full play was often justified by its results, and had not Smith's father been a gentleman usher to Queen Charlotte, and his brother Spencer one of her pages, George III would have been deprived of the higher activities of one of his ablest subjects.

II

The end of the war meant complete professional extinction for half the officers of the fleet. They had their half-pay, but so few ships were kept in commission during peace that only those with exceptional interest behind them could hope for further employment.

Even Smith had nothing to look forward to but command of a guardship, so, unlike most of his brethren, who retired to the country and spent their time killing wild birds, bullying gamekeepers and putting wandering mendicants in the village stocks, he decided to qualify himself for future service by travel and observation. Most naval officers even in our own time know little of the interior of the countries which they visit, or of the problems and customs of their inhabitants. Too often their opinion of such is based solely on the ports they touch at, which are generally cosmopolitan in nature, and on the facilities for sport which the immediate neighbourhood offers. Smith, however, had other ideas; he travelled

purposefully and at his own expense in order to find out as much as possible about those countries with which he had reason to think we might be fighting in the near future.

First, therefore, he visited France, the hereditary enemy, whose system of tactics and signals had recently proved so effective, though the ordinary English officer called it mere slipperiness, and, having affirmed that one Englishman was a match for three Frenchmen, left it at that. Smith spent some time in Normandy, where he was patronised by the Duc d'Harcourt, of life at whose château he was a most minute observer, commenting on the gardens, furniture and social occupations in letters of prodigious length. He met a great many French naval officers with whom he had been engaged in various battles, and was taken to see the new works begun at the naval base of Cherbourg. He visited Bayeux, Coutances, Caen and La Hogue, where he read Admiral Russell's letter, specially brought for the purpose, and tried to identify the spot where James II watched the destruction of the French fleet and transports. At St. Malo and round Cancale he was shown the holes made by the shots from his own squadron's bombardment in 1779, which the ' quondam enemies ' now sold as old iron at twelve sous apiece. He had an introduction to the commandant of St. Malo, met many navy and army officers who had been present at the Saints, and spent two days at Mont St. Michel with the monks.

In 1787 he went to Gibraltar, and, being ' a witness to the Emperor of Morocco's unreasonable demands and imperious language,' ' judged a war with him to be not far distant, and therefore undertook a journey through his dominions, in order to acquire a knowledge of his coasts, harbours and force, so as to be of use in case of

such an event taking place.' This knowledge he laid before the Admiralty in a most able, though of course unsolicited, despatch, in which he urged that a special squadron should be based in Lagos Bay, consisting of shallow-draught sloops and frigates, for use against the Moroccan harbours on the Atlantic coast, which were difficult to enter and from which much danger might be expected. Needless to say, he suggested himself as the most suitable commander of such a force, trusting that 'want in professional experience and ability will be made up for by local knowledge and zeal for the public service.'

But, unfortunately for Smith, the emperor became less 'imperious' in tone, and there was no war. The next enterprise was a journey to St. Petersburg and Stockholm, prompted by news of the war which had recently begun between Sweden and Russia. King Gustaf III of Sweden had seized the opportunity offered by a Russo-Turkish War to invade Russian Finland, and, finding his own naval forces particularly difficult to handle, it is not surprising that he should offer the command of the 'light squadron' to the charming Englishman who arrived at his Court looking for trouble and full of persuasive advice on how to overcome it.

So in January 1790 Smith came hurrying home to ask the Admiralty for permission to accept the offer, bearing a letter from the King and another from his brother Carl, Duke of Södermanland. The Duke was commander-in-chief of the Swedish navy, and in his letter to Smith he begged him to 'return as quick as you can and bring some of your brave Englishmen with you, for we stand in need of officers.' In addition to this unflattering testimonial to the Swedish navy, Smith was privileged to receive some very minute particulars of the King's

intentions and sentiments with regard to the war, which he was charged to place before the British Cabinet, while he actually carried despatches from the British Ambassador. But, on arriving in England, his enthusiasm was sharply checked by the Duke of Leeds, the Foreign Secretary, who was rather worried about Baltic affairs, and resigned soon after over the Russian armament question. Naturally he did not relish Smith's appearance as an unofficial envoy, King's messenger and sailor of fortune, and for some time was unapproachable. What discreet patience might have achieved we cannot tell, but Smith was exasperated at missing the fun, which was timed to start when the ice broke up. He rushed back to Sweden in April in order to accompany the King unofficially, as a volunteer, his request for permission to accept the command not having been answered. Finding the campaign had already begun, he hurried north to the Gulf of Finland and joined the King at sea, remarking in a letter to Sir Robert Liston, our Minister at Stockholm: 'Without vanity, I am sure I should be of use, for all our business depends on measuring with a *coup d'œil*, and not on being so attached to rule and mathematical certainty, where the data change during the operation. This is the reason why our rule-of-thumb people often succeed better than the best theorists, though, if they were asked a reason, they would only say, " they does because they does." You see, I have mounted my hobby-horse but I shall not let him run away with me on paper now . . .'

The immediate situation was that the Duke of Södermanland had completely failed to destroy the Russian squadron at anchor at Reval, and was now working along the coast of Finland, east of Helsingfors, with his light squadron, covered by the main fleet. On land the Swedish army was advancing along the coast in the

direction of Wiborg, and was supposed to be co-operating with the fleet.

Smith found the King in a worried mood, trying to co-ordinate the activities of fleet and army. This was not easy, as the officers of both services were somewhat backward in spirit and the Duke was little of a seaman. Smith, however, was soon berthed in the royal yacht, and constituted himself as naval adviser and aide-de-camp to the King, whom he urged on to more vigorous measures. He pointed out that the Swedes were brave men and good seamen, but were at present embarrassed by their inexperience in organisation and fear of responsibility.

His plan was to defeat the Russian Cronstadt fleet before the squadron from Reval could join it, but this proved impossible, and the whole Swedish force retired, outnumbered, into the entrance of Wiborg. Here, in the inner harbour, was a Russian flotilla, protected by shore batteries, and it was decided to destroy both these by a combined operation, and so give the Swedes the control of the whole inlet.

Smith received a letter authorising him to issue commands connected with this enterprise in the King's name, and he actually led part of the attack himself. The other sections of it, however, were countermanded by the King, who feared the sudden approach of the Russian fleet from outside. Worse still, the army which was supposed to be attacking the Russian positions on the mainland was also forbidden to co-operate, and consequently Smith made his attack near the island of Uransari practically unaided. He approached his objective in the middle of the night and landed under a hot fire; and, after losing 300 men, was lucky to be able to re-embark without being captured.

The main Russian fleet now closed in, and the Swedes, being short of supplies, were in a difficult position. Presumably on Smith's advice, the Duke decided to attempt a break through, the intention of which he cleverly concealed by taking up a defended anchorage flanked by shoals and islands. Having drawn the main Russian attack and thrown it into some confusion, the Swedish battle-fleet pushed out and made its escape, though not without considerable loss. Meanwhile, the Swedish 'light squadron' was extricated by a separate operation in which it defeated the Prince of Nassau's flotilla, capturing and sinking 64 of his vessels, and only lost four itself.

In August peace was made on the basis of a return to the *status quo* position, the Swedes being distinctly lucky to obtain even terms. From this time onwards their naval power grew less and less, while the Russians continued supreme in the Baltic till the appearance of the new imperial navy of Germany.

Smith returned to England in triumph, having been knighted by King Gustaf at sea, and awarded the Grand Cross of the Royal Military Order of the Sword. This decoration he could not assume without permission of King George III, who, at the request of King Gustaf, invested him with it on 19th May, 1792. He was thus gratified by an official English recognition of his activities, which had certainly been of considerable importance. He had acted as personal aide-de-camp between the King and the Duke, planned the greater part of the operations, led an attack in person, and at the same time contrived not to arouse too much jealousy amongst the Swedish officers. Nor was the general failure of the campaign in any way due to his influence, since the Swedish fleet was so curiously organised, and so lacking in self-confidence

that it appears to have been lucky to have escaped complete annihilation by the Russians.

III

Meanwhile, the war between the Turks and Russians continued, and Smith therefore determined to go out to Constantinople and examine the situation. Doubtless he hoped for an appointment in the Turkish navy, on the strength of his recent Baltic experience against the Russians, but, in any case, an intelligence report on the Black Sea, Bosphorus, Sea of Marmora and the Dardanelles would be very useful to the British Government, which was strongly anti-Russian and had recently exercised its neutrality in favour of the Swedes. It will be seen, therefore, that Smith was careful only to contemplate entering the service of States which were on good terms with England. Another reason suggested for his journey is that he was charged with a secret mission by the Cabinet, and there certainly seems to be evidence amongst his papers of his having received a sum of £1,500 from the Foreign Office.

A more personal reason for his interest in Constantinople is provided by the fact that Sir Robert Liston, with whom he had been on good terms at Stockholm, was now Ambassador to the Porte, and was shortly to be succeeded by his own brother, Charles Spencer Smith. He had only been in the Near East a few months when he was recalled, England having joined the First Coalition against the French Republic. He came home through Smyrna, and there ' observed a number of British seamen prowling about the streets, and, acquainting them of the war, found they were willing to enter with him in service.'

So, having bought a local lateen-rigged vessel, he selected forty of them as a crew and set off.

They soon found that most exciting events were already taking place inside the Mediterranean, for, at the invitation of the citizens of Toulon, Lord Hood had occupied the port and brought an international army to defend it, in the name of the French monarchy. Thus the great objective of all previous English strategy in the Mediterranean was in our hands, without a shot being fired. But the Republicans at Paris immediately set about its recapture, and, by identifying themselves with the ejection of the foreigners and the slaughter of the 'White' traitors, they triumphantly turned the cause of civil revolution into that of militant nationalism. Their army arrived, including the trained ex-royal regular artillery, officered principally by discontented men with brains, like Buonaparte. The international army wilted and retired from its forward positions, and Lord Hood prepared to abandon Toulon to slaughter amidst the prayers and laments of its Royalist population.

A rapid, orderly evacuation was necessary before Buonaparte's guns could be advanced sufficiently to bear on the British fleet. But the Republicans advanced so rapidly, and the allied troops co-operated so badly, that soon the port was in a terrible state of confusion. Soldiers of four different nations were being hastily embarked together with crowds of citizens fleeing with their families and goods; and, meanwhile, the whole French fleet and the well-stocked arsenal were waiting to be taken unharmed by the Republican attackers. Hood had hoped to be able to carry out most of the French ships in plenty of time, and then burn the remainder and the dockyard at the last moment; but events were moving too quickly for him, and in a few hours he would have lost the

magnificent opportunity of preventing the Republicans from conducting any important naval operations in the Mediterranean. At this stage Smith, who had joined the fleet a fortnight earlier, volunteered to burn the dockyard and the ships still in it, although he was only on half-pay, and had therefore no status in the fleet.

Hood at once accepted his offer, and, while the French ships in the harbour and roadstead were being slowly withdrawn, Smith entered the dockyard with a picked force to destroy such ships as were building, or under repair, and therefore incapable of being moved, and also the stores and arsenal.

His sloops and gun-boats pushed in, led by his Smyrna vessel, now dignified with the title of the *Swallow* tender. Round the gates on the land side swarmed the workmen, strongly Republican in sentiment, and many of them already sporting the tricolour cockade in anticipation of the fall of the town.

Seeing Smith's force about to destroy what they hoped was to become the Republic's instrument of war, and which, in any case, was their own source of livelihood, they attempted to break in the gates which the Royalist governor had secured by 'judicious arrangements.' Inside the dockyard the galley slaves were also 'adopting a menacing attitude,' and all the time it was being shelled by the Republicans from the surrounding hills, who kept drawing nearer and nearer. Luckily their attentions checked the ardour of the workmen and galley-slaves, while Smith's men walked about quite unconcernedly preparing the ships and storehouses for burning. On a signal from the Royalist governor the general magazine, pitch, tar, tallow, oil storehouses and the mast-house were all set alight. Smith drew off his force under cover of a fire-ship with which he had so far held the

galley-slaves in check, and which, being fired, discharged her guns automatically as they heated, right into the middle of the advancing Republicans.

The rout of the Royalist forces was now complete, and as their rear-guard embarked 'the villainous part of the community broke loose' and pursued them to the shore, where they murdered or drowned a mass of stragglers and Royalist citizens trying to escape to the fleet. Boatloads of refugees, many without oars, drifted about shrieking to the English to save them, amidst a heavy fire from the Republicans on shore, while, to add to the confusion, two powder-ships were blown up by mistake instead of being sunk, and discharged a mass of fragments all over the harbour.

Smith's party acted with extraordinary coolness in this dangerous and terrible scene, calmly spiking guns, setting fire to French warships, and covering as best they could the boatloads of soldiers and refugees. Of the French warships lying in the harbour and dockyard at the time, 23 had already been taken out by the allies, 24 were burnt, and only 11 were left for the Republicans. In addition, the magazines and principal storehouses were practically destroyed, and for the moment, at any rate, Toulon ceased to be a danger as a Republican base. Nevertheless, our intervention on land had brought a terrible retribution on our Royalist supporters, whose lives and property we were quite unable to protect. The same thing happened in Russia after the Great War, where the half-hearted support given by the Allies to the 'Whites' only served to unite and consolidate the forces of the revolution.

It is difficult to estimate the exact value of Smith's Toulon achievement. Being head and shoulders above the generality of his colleagues in ability and foresight,

he not unnaturally incurred their envy. Being a great talker, he also incurred their suspicion. Unfortunately, there was mixed with his talk a streak of downright boastfulness, which not only exasperated and sickened them, but which brought on him the anger of St. Vincent and Nelson, who might otherwise have esteemed his talents. 'We have just got accounts that the French Fleet is at sea,' wrote Nelson, 'twenty-two sail of the line. Sir Sidney Smith did not burn them all—Lord Hood mistook the man: there is an old song, "*Great talkers do the least we see.*"'

As this letter was written in 1795, it ignored the fact that the Republicans had had plenty of time to build a fresh fleet, and is therefore unfair to Smith. He undoubtedly acted with great energy and success on this occasion; but it is unlikely that he got much credit from his associates, seeing that he was on half-pay at the time, and therefore regarded as an interloper. Such feelings are too easily bred by a hide-bound professional routine.

IV

To his great delight, Smith was sent home by Hood with despatches, giving details of the defence and evacuation of Toulon and of the part he himself had played. He arrived in January 1794, and was almost immediately appointed to the *Diamond* frigate, and was employed in the North Sea and the Channel, protecting trade and watching enemy ports.

In the winter of the same year, a reconstruction of the Ministry, consequent upon the coalition between Pitt and the Portland Whigs, brought George, Earl Spencer, to the Admiralty. He was a man of great prudence and

ability, who showed exceptional energy in promoting the success and efficiency of the Navy, without overstepping the statesman's rôle and attempting to interfere too much in the conduct of operations. Moreover, being a man of wide intellectual attainments and untrammelled by naval prejudices, 'his courtly attention' was by no means exhausted when Smith began to bombard him with hints on how to win the war, under the guise of routine correspondence. 'The command of our little squadron having devolved on me (*pro tempore*), during the absence of Sir Edward Pellew,' begins Smith in a letter of 25th December, 1794, and then goes on to use this opportunity of a personal communication to the First Lord as a pretext for a general review of our naval strategy. 'Thus you see you have eyes in this quarter,' he remarks, in describing an ordinary piece of intelligence work, and ends somewhat jauntily, 'Adieu, my dear Lord. Believe me ever, Yours most faithfully.'

The ordinary Channel service, however, seems to have been little to his taste, and in January 1795 he undertook a most daring enterprise in reconnoitring Brest with his ship disguised and under French colours. While sailing about in the outer harbour he aroused the suspicion of a battleship, which prepared to prevent his exit. Seeing there was little chance of escape, he boldly bore down under her stern, and, noticing she was disabled, hailed the captain and asked him in French if he wanted any assistance. As he could see crowds of men looking over the side, this was obviously unnecessary, and, after much talk and many thanks from the French captain, Smith was able to complete his audacious bluff by getting out to sea.

In March he was given the command of a frigate and thirty sloops and gunboats, but while they were

getting ready he 'delivered a bold but unsuccessful attack' with only eight ships on the French warships lying at St. Malo. Next he had a brilliant scheme for occupying the mouth of the Seine with rowing gunboats, and so cutting off the coasting trade to Paris, and this he at once communicated to Spencer. In the same letter he boldly exposed the appalling misery and pain to which his wounded men were put by not having a hospital ship attached, or enough surgeons. 'It will certainly require all your energy,' he added, 'to attack a form of office which coolly tells me a man must be *sent into port* to stop a bleeding artery.' Spencer at once answered that he would do everything he could to improve matters. He neither denied the charges, nor excused himself, nor rebuked Smith for impertinence; but, on the other hand, he did not lose his dignity. Smith treated him as an equal, both in rank and office, and he treated Smith in return as few even great men have been able to treat their more brilliant subordinates. He did not sit behind the uniform of his rank and office and try to 'let it tell.'

There seems to have been considerable difficulty in getting together the units of Smith's original squadron; but he paid little attention to lack of force, and in July attacked some French frigates and a convoy with only three frigates and two gunboats. He managed to drive the enemy ships into shoal water near Cape La Hogue, but was beaten off by volleys of red-hot shot from the shore batteries. He was now based on the Channel Isles, together with a squadron under Sir Richard Strachan, their duty being to protect the islands, and stop the enemy's coasting trade. In this they were so successful that very soon there were signs that the enemy ports on the north coast were in great want of food. Not content with his routine duties, Smith continually took

the offensive, and boldly entered Havre and Cherbourg harbours, counting the ships in them and firing on them whenever possible.

There was, moreover, another side to his activities, for so energetically did he press the north coast that the French feared a landing there, and so had their attention diverted from the unfortunate expedition to Quiberon Bay, where the *emigrés* were landed during the summer.

Smith had by this time established such a close relationship with Spencer that he felt able to address him in a personal letter on a most delicate question of naval discipline. The Duke of York, as commander-in-chief of the Army, had recently issued regulations ' exempting soldiers on board ship from the jurisdiction of naval courts-martial, even when they were serving as marines.' It was the outcome of a long-standing jealousy between the two services, aggravated by the unprecedented number of inharmonious operations they had recently conducted together. The regulations provoked a strong protest to Spencer from a number of flag-officers and captains at Portsmouth. ' It is natural, therefore,' wrote Smith, ' for you to expect some explanation from your friends on the subject, and, as I am one of your sincerest, I feel myself under the obligation to give you all the light I can collect.' He then proceeds to argue the whole question from the naval point of view, quoting from the Articles of War and Acts of Parliament.

Spencer again did not stand on his dignity, but thanked Smith most cordially for his opinion. In fact, their whole correspondence by this time was of a kind seldom carried on between Minister and subordinate ; and it is a great tribute to Spencer that he was capable of gaining and encouraging the confidence of one of the most turbulent spirits of the age. As usual, Smith had urged

the case for the Navy with great force, but in rather an elementary fashion. Spencer in his reply, marked *most private*, contented himself with observing that several expressions in the Act were 'rather loosely drawn' and capable of varying interpretation, but he strongly deprecated the action of the flag-officers and captains as likely to prejudice their cause. 'This letter,' he concluded, 'is written to you in the greatest confidence, and I desire it may not be shown to any person whatever.'

A few days afterwards Smith was cheerily telling Spencer that his latest report on the French marine 'seems to promise us some good sport.' He then lamented his own lack of shallow-draft vessels wherewith to catch the French coasters, jocosely adding, that 'whenever your lordship chooses to gratify their commanders with a sight of the enemy, I shall be happy to point out the ground where this gratification is to be found.'

In the spring of 1796 Smith became even more daring in his coastal raids, and in March he entered Herqui with his squadron, burnt the shipping, silenced the shore batteries, landed, spiked their guns and captured their colours. After this notable achievement he planned a raid on the mouth of the Seine at Havre for the purpose of cutting out a noted privateer lugger, *Le Vengeur*, that had so far defied capture by our fastest frigates. This ship made a practice of following our convoys in the night and boarding as many ships as she could, into which she put prize crews. The captive ships were then navigated amidst the rest of the unsuspecting convoy, till a favourable moment came for them to break away and slip over to the French coast.

On the night of the 18th April Smith brought the

Diamond nearly into the mouth of the Seine, and got ready four boats and a wherry, which he manned with a strong party of seamen. He then discovered that the first lieutenant was too ill to lead the expedition, and decided to go himself. Approaching the lugger with extreme caution as she was lying under a ten-gun battery, Smith sent two boats to each side of her and placed his wherry under her stern; and she was boarded simultaneously by the whole party. Smith found the officers sitting in bed and loading their pistols. 'Vous pouvez être assurés, messieurs,' he courteously observed, 'que ie ne suis pas ici sans force suffisante pour vous faire soumettre, et je vous engage fortement de rendre vos armes de suite.' They did so and the capture was complete, but meanwhile some Frenchmen had cut the cable, and, as the flood-tide was setting strongly up the Seine, Smith soon found that his prize was being carried right up the river and that there was no wind. At daybreak *Le Vengeur* lay becalmed some distance above Havre, and Smith ordered the boats to take her in tow as the only means of getting her away. The sight of the famous privateer being carried off by strange boats at once raised an alarm in Havre, and soon a large lugger could be seen being warped out to intercept them, together with a crowd of armed boats. After a desperate fight lasting two hours three of Smith's boats were captured; meanwhile he harangued the crowds of yelling Frenchmen surrounding the privateer and explained that he and his officers and men would resist to the last unless they were given quarter. The French, who had been thoroughly roused and were out for blood, now grew calmer. They agreed to accept Smith and his twenty associates as prisoners, and came on board and exchanged 'cordial salutations.'

Smith's party were taken into Havre, where they naturally expected that their exchange could be easily effected by the English Government releasing French prisoners of equal rank. The Admiralty at once took the initiative by sending Captain Bergeret, a prisoner, to France on parole to arrange for his exchange with Smith; but, much to his surprise, he found that Smith was not to be released. He therefore returned to England and reported his failure, and at the same time resumed his position as a prisoner.

Smith's recent activities on the coast had certainly made him a marked man, but that in itself would not have been enough to make the French refuse to release him. Possibly he was suspected of being too closely connected with the *emigrés* against whom the Republic acted with such relentless severity. He certainly had been in communication with them, as is shown by his letters to Spencer, and he even had one with him at the time of his capture whom he pretended was his servant. Another reason suggested for his retention was the prominent part he had played at Toulon while on half-pay and therefore not holding a proper commission, which gave his action a piratical flavour, despite his official instructions from Lord Hood.

Anyhow, the authorities at Havre chose to regard him as a professional incendiary who had come to fire their dockyard, and they even claimed to have found '*un agot soufré*' in his possession. He was, therefore, driven off to Paris in a chaise and lodged in the Abbaye prison, together with his secretary and his supposed servant. Meanwhile, the English Government rightly refused to admit 'any justifiable grounds of distinction between the case of Sir Sidney Smith and that of any other officer captured, in His Majesty's service.'

In Paris, Smith came under the authority of the Directory, who, however, made no attempt to prosecute, and were probably somewhat puzzled and embarrassed by the action of the zealots of Havre.

He soon managed to establish communication by signal with 'three females who inhabited the houses that faced the prison windows,' and who had apparently assisted other prisoners. Through them he is supposed to have got in touch with the Sardinian Ambassador to England, then visiting Paris, and to have obtained money from him. He christened the 'females' Thalia, Melpomene and Clio, and they soon communicated to him that they were arranging plans for his escape. Whether the authorities knew of this is uncertain, but the Muses' schemes were soon cut short by the sudden transference of Smith and his two friends to the Temple.

Here he at once 'gained the confidence' of the gaoler, Boniface, and his wife, who was 'a pretty little woman, and Sir Sidney, who was good-looking in those days, was on terms of perfect understanding with her.'

Consequently he was allowed considerable liberty, and often went out for walks in Paris. He had, meanwhile, christened his *emigré* 'servant' John Bromley. Luckily John could speak English, with a vile accent, which, however, was not noticed by the French; and Smith applied to the Directory for his release as a non-combatant. If the unfortunate man's nationality and position had once been discovered he would, of course, have been instantly guillotined. But through his own good acting and Smith's consummate bluff he was actually 'repatriated' from Calais.

On landing in England, he went straight to London and reported to the Cabinet, and then crossed again to Havre, where he appeared as John Bromley, English

domestic servant, requesting permission to attend to his master's wants in the Temple.

Leave was granted, and he arrived in Paris again, having arranged on the way for Smith's escape stage by stage to Havre. In this he was aided by his wife, and also by Monsieur Phélypeaux, a Royalist engineer, living secretly in Paris. Smith was allowed considerable liberty by Boniface, who permitted him to pay daily visits almost anywhere he chose, while many 'respectable ladies' were admitted to him at the Temple. Mrs. Cosway made a miniature of him, other ladies wrote verses about him, and a duke's sister of tender years bombarded him with a long series of ecstatic letters.

Soon the distinguished sailor and Swedish knight became one of the lesser celebrities of Directoire Paris. But this notoriety had its dangers, for the Admiralty discovered through the conversation of some French prisoners that there was a scheme on foot for poisoned tea to be given him by a released French prisoner purporting to bring letters to him from England. A new prisoner, too, was sent to the Temple whose appearance troubled the accommodating Boniface. He was a criminal condemned to the galleys, but had permission to correspond secretly with the Directory.

Very soon he proposed a plan to Smith for their escape to the coast, which Smith, warned by Boniface, pretended to agree to. But on the night arranged he observed through his window the soldiers in the guard-room 'loading their muskets with an air of mystery about them,' so he quietly went to bed. Next day he requested a personal interview with the Minister of the Interior, who did not come himself, but sent an aide-de-camp in uniform, to whom Smith related the whole affair, and the day after the convict was removed from the Temple.

Eventually Smith's plans for escape were complete, and one day Boniface was startled by the appearance of two officers in uniform who came to the Temple with an order to remove Smith to Fontainebleau. They were, of course, friends of Bromley and Phélypeaux, and their order was a forgery, although bearing an official signature and seal. The registrar of the prison was for sending an escort of six soldiers with them, but the chief conspirator dispensed with these by saying that if Smith gave his parole their attendance would not be required. He then gave Boniface a discharge for his prisoner 'and boldly signed it with a flourish—L. Oger, Adjutant-Général.'

Boniface took leave of Smith most affectionately, promised to visit him at Fontainebleau and bring him his books, and was very ill at ease lest the Directory should have any evil intentions against him. Smith, however, assured him that he would be very happy at Fontainebleau, and drove off in a fiacre with his secretary and attended by the two pseudo-officers. They hid that night in a friend's house, and next day started with Phélypeaux for the coast in a coach which they sent through the barriers separately, pretending that it was one from the provinces returning empty. On catching sight of Havre, when some distance off, the postilion turned round and called out to Phélypeaux, 'Ah! Voilà, citoyen, où nous avons pris l'Amiral Smith; mais nous le tenons à présent.' At Havre they secured the services of a small fishing boat, which took them right out into the Channel, where they were picked up by Captain Bowen in the *Argo* frigate and landed at Portsmouth.

So complete was Smith's assumption of French speech and manner, that Sir William Hotham, when asked to

breakfast on board the *Argo*, spoke to him for some minutes without in the least realising that he was anything but a Frenchman.

V

Smith reached London in May 1796, after spending just over two years in France. The daring nature of the exploit which led to his capture and the stubbornness of the Directory in refusing his exchange had served to keep his name before the public. When, therefore, he reappeared after a most dramatic escape from one of the Republic's most formidable prisons, he became the most talked-of man in England and was 'treated as the lion of the day.' He was welcomed at the Admiralty by Spencer and presented to the King, and was obviously destined for further 'employment' in the near future.

The origin of his next adventure can be found in a letter written by Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary, to Lord Spencer on 18th September, 1798, in which he discussed the effect of Buonaparte's Egyptian expedition on our Mediterranean strategy. Lord Grenville suggested that Nelson's proper sphere of activity should be the western Mediterranean, including Naples, Sicily, Minorca and Toulon, and that a separate squadron should be provided to deal with Buonaparte's fleet which was supposed to be at Alexandria. This squadron, he thought, should be 'under an active officer to co-operate with Turks and Russians,' who were both threatening to join the Second Coalition against France. 'That officer, for many reasons which I have stated to you, I should propose to be Sir S. S., really not out of partiality to him, but thinking that his name is better known to both Russians and Turks, and his character better suited to

act with them, than that many of other officers whom possibly you would prefer for a Channel cruise.'

The news of Nelson's victory in Aboukir Bay on 1st August had not yet arrived when Grenville wrote, but a few days later all London was ringing with it.

At first there was a tendency to regard the whole campaign as at an end, and Grenville thought that the special Levant squadron would be unnecessary. On 3rd October, however, he wrote to Spencer: 'I think I have begun to alter my mind again about Sir Sidney Smith—you must not laugh at me for the unstableness of my opinion—but I think till the French are actually driven out of Egypt and the Archipelago, there still remains something to be done . . .

Accordingly, during October 1798, Smith found himself appointed to the *Tigre*, a fine two-decker of eighty guns, recently captured from the French by Lord Bridport. His instructions were to join Lord St. Vincent from whom he would receive his next orders either at Gibraltar or off Cadiz. But, in addition, he received from Lord Grenville a Foreign Office commission appointing him joint plenipotentiary with his brother, Spencer Smith, to the Court of the Ottoman Emperor at Constantinople.

The intentions of the Government were more fully explained in a confidential letter to St. Vincent of 9th October, in which Spencer stated that on the strength of Nelson's victory at Aboukir a great effort was to be made to obtain Turkish co-operation in blockading Alexandria and cutting off Buonaparte's army from all communication with France. As the work of the officer who undertook this duty would be largely diplomatic, it was deemed expedient to give him plenipotentiary powers, which in Smith's case would be especially

suitable, as the Ambassador at Constantinople was his brother. 'I am well aware,' continued Spencer, 'that there may perhaps be some prejudices, derived from certain circumstances, which have attended this officer's career through life, but, from a long acquaintance with him personally, I think I can venture to assure your lordship that, added to his unquestioned character for courage and enterprise, he has a great many good points about him, which those who are less acquainted with him are not sufficiently apprised of, and I have no doubt you will find him a very useful instrument to be employed on any hazardous or difficult service, and that he will be perfectly under your guidance, as he ought to be.'

As there was no official Mediterranean fleet in existence at the moment, owing to our withdrawal in 1796, St. Vincent was really in charge of all operations inside the Straits, although his station was off Cadiz. Nelson's squadron, therefore, was only a detachment from St. Vincent's command, and Smith's squadron would be a sub-detachment from Nelson's when he came to operate in the Levant.

Thus did Spencer seek to smooth the way when putting his most independent officer under the orders of his sternest disciplinarian. Nevertheless, there were obvious drawbacks to Grenville's and Spencer's plan. It put Smith in a very anomalous position in his relations with his immediate naval superiors, since he would be acting at one moment as the commander of a detached squadron under Nelson and Lord St. Vincent and the next as a British Ambassador and official of the Foreign Office.

Moreover, his personality was such that it was almost certain that in discharging his highly intricate and delicate duties he would have little regard for any instructions

whatever, either civil or military. Once allowed a free hand in a distant arena, it would be most difficult to control him, since he could always plead his powers as diplomat to St. Vincent, and his instructions as a captain to Grenville. 'Possessing in the highest degree the essential military qualities of courage and resourcefulness, and imagination, he combined with them presumption, vanity and exaggerated self-will,' and looked forward to conducting in person a campaign against Buonaparte in which he could act as a commander-in-chief endowed with plenary powers.

Misunderstandings arose almost at once, for St. Vincent, imagining that Spencer intended Smith's squadron to be entirely independent of Nelson, took no steps to put him under Nelson's orders, although he naturally expected that Smith would pay proper respect to Nelson's rank and precedence when passing through the area of his command. But, instead, Nelson's self-esteem was outraged by a businesslike but distinctly jaunty letter from Smith, written as from one commander-in-chief to another, setting forth the advantages to be derived from his dual rôle of sailor and diplomatist, and excusing his own appointment as so junior an officer as 'dictated by a delicacy due to my brother.' His instructions from Lord Grenville, he said, did not include any authority to make their contents known to Nelson, nevertheless, if they had met he would have felt himself authorised to communicate them 'in the most unreserved fashion.' In any case, he was sending Nelson such parts of them as he could 'venture to transmit out of cypher.' Remarks on the need for an efficient cypher followed, which Smith would supply in due course, and the letter ended with grand but sincere compliments on the battle of Aboukir.

To a man like Nelson this letter was absolutely infuriating, especially when he received it while depressed by the wound he had received in his head, and worried by the difficult task of carrying the Neapolitan royal family to Palermo. He unburdened himself to St. Vincent with his usual candour, declaiming against 'the Swedish Knight' for his lack of respect and asking for permission for himself to return to England forthwith.

St. Vincent had also received a letter from Smith, assuming the liberty to dispose of such ships as he found already in the Levant in any manner he chose.

St. Vincent was alarmed; what? lose Nelson! not if he could help it; and all because Smith had taken upon himself to order Nelson's ships about. He quickly wrote three letters. The first was to Smith, very short and sharp, expressing his 'utmost surprise and disapprobation of your giving orders to any ship not specially appointed to serve under you by Rear-Admiral Lord Nelson'; while, to avoid 'further misunderstandings,' Smith was ordered to put himself under Nelson's 'immediate command.'

He also wrote to Spencer complaining of an arrogant letter from Smith to Sir William Hamilton at Naples, and that Smith's conduct 'has wounded Rear-Admiral Lord Nelson to the quick.' Lastly, he wrote a soothing letter to Nelson sympathising with his feelings being outraged, 'at the bold attempt of Sir Sidney Smith to wrest a part of your squadron from you. . . .' 'The ascendancy this gentleman has over His Majesty's Ministers,' he added, 'is to me as astonishing, and that they should have sent him out after the strong objection I made to him, in a private letter to Mr. Nepean,[1] passes my understanding. . . . Employ Sir Sidney Smith in any

[1] Secretary of the Admiralty.

manner you think proper ; knowing your magnanimity, I know you will mortify him as little as possible, consistently with what is due to the great characters on the List, and his superiors in every sense of the word. God bless you, my dear Lord, be assured no man loves and esteems you more truly than your very affectionate, St. Vincent.'

Having worked off most of his resentment in his letter to St. Vincent, Nelson answered Smith quite calmly, stating that the blockade of Alexandria should be handed over to him, and adding that ' from my heart I wish you every success.' To Spencer also Nelson contented himself with hoping that Smith would not take any ships away from him, adding, ' I am probably considered as having a great force, but I always desire it to be understood that I count the Portuguese as nothing but trouble.'

Meanwhile, the cause of all the irritation pursued his course to the East, heedless of the outraged dignitaries fulminating in his wake. Arrived off Alexandria, he learnt that the French were for the moment quiet, and so hurried north to Constantinople. Here he quickly inflamed the Porte with the desire to win back Egypt from the French, and on 5th January, 1799, a treaty was signed by which the Ottoman Government pledged itself to assist the British by sea and land. Realising that at any moment Buonaparte might march out of Egypt into Syria, he only waited long enough to see the Turks lay down some gunboats and launches, and then left for Alexandria again, telling them to follow as soon as they were ready. He passed the Dardanelles on 22nd February, was off Rhodes on 27th, and reached Alexandria on 3rd March. By this time he had learnt something of Buonaparte's intention, and had formed a definite plan for his Anglo-Turkish campaign.

After the destruction of Bruey's fleet in Aboukir Bay, Buonaparte had, of course, realised the difficulty of his own position. He was isolated, in Egypt, with an army large enough to be an embarrassment, but insufficient for the conquest of the Orient. But he also realised that it would be very difficult for the British to land troops on the coast of Egypt wherewith to eject him until the spring, so that, although his own situation was precarious, he was momentarily safe from attack.

On the other hand, his eastern flank was being threatened by Djezzar Pasha, the Governor of Syria, who, on the instructions of the Porte, was fortifying El Arish and mobilising the tribesmen. This action might be purely defensive, but Buonaparte could hardly risk letting it develop further, and so decided to march into Syria and attack Djezzar's fortified posts before the British could bring them any assistance.

Having mastered Egypt, Buonaparte's magnificent army set out on a campaign similar to that conducted by Allenby. Passing along the north of the Sinai peninsula, they captured El Arish on 20th February, Gaza on the 25th and Jaffa on 7th March, where they massacred all the Turkish prisoners. Nothing now remained to the Pasha but the ancient Crusader town of Acre, which was his capital, and which he was determined to defend to the last if supported by the British. The situation for all concerned was extremely critical. If Acre fell, Buonaparte would have a clear road to Constantinople, and the control of the overland route to the far East, while he was already feeding Tippoo Sahib with plans for the expulsion of the British from India. In any case, if he got to Constantinople it might easily mean the eclipse of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, if he failed, the whole prestige of revolutionary France

would be shaken, the Second Coalition would become a fact, and the government of the Directory would be in the gravest danger.

The Turks and their local allies were stubborn in defence, fiercely fanatical and in colossal numbers, but the majority of them were practically savages, unused to scientific European warfare and easily disconcerted by heavy artillery. The French were a formidable body of highly trained veterans, commanded by Europe's greatest soldier, but they were cut off from home, lacking in provisions and oppressed by the climate. The result of the coming campaign depended entirely on the action of the British, and the British were represented solely by Smith in the *Tigre* and Captain R. W. Miller in the *Theseus*.

It was as well that this was so, for more ships would have meant that captains would have arrived senior to Smith, by whom he would have been superseded. 'The great characters senior to him on the list' were men whose reputation in purely naval affairs it would be difficult to challenge; but too many of them evinced that contempt for the assistance of irregulars which was and always has been the hall-mark of the purely departmental strategist. They could direct the stately attack of great ships with all the unruffled suavity of a beau at a garden party, but were unwilling to appreciate the value of allies who did not wear knee-breeches and cravats. The campaign of Acre was not an occasion for the display of good clothes or good-breeding, it was a real fight in which men strove desperately for victory regardless of the formalities of professional civilised warfare. In work of this sort, Smith was certainly superior 'in every sense of the word' to most of those whose reputations had been invoked against him. He

was a brilliant and tenacious fighter who took every advantage of his curious naval-diplomatic position and succeeded in firing his Turkish allies with a zeal which they would never have shown in response to the chilling encouragements of the ordinary stiff and starched officer from St. James's. Luckily Smith was a man of unbridled vanity and self-conceit, otherwise he could never have beaten Buonaparte. If he thought he could inspire the Turks by wearing their own costume he did so; if nagged by his naval superiors he retorted that he was an ambassador; and if reprimanded by the Foreign Office he claimed the superior knowledge of the man on the spot.

He was the first Englishman to engage Buonaparte in direct warfare, and his success was entirely due to his own energy and self-confidence, and in no sense to that of his superiors, who left him entirely unsupported while they circulated plans for repressions and snubs.

It is rather sickening to read the stream of malicious tittle-tattle which went the round of the Mediterranean at the moment when Smith was about to face the most difficult piece of fighting that had yet occurred in the war. 'His lordship' [St. Vincent], writes Nelson in triumph to Captain Ball, 'has taken him down very handsomely, and, to prevent any further mistakes, has ordered Sir Sidney to put himself immediately under my command, which I suppose the great Plenipo will not like.'

'About Sir Sidney I thank you most truly,' he writes to St. Vincent himself, '. . . you are everything which is great and good.'

But Smith was not the type of man to be put down by this type of criticism, even if he had known of it. Instead, he hoisted a broad pendant on the strength of his two

ships in order to add to his prestige in the eyes of the French and Turks. He had received no instructions to call himself a commodore, but, according to his own reasoning, this was immaterial.

Moreover, in writing to Nelson he made such extensive play with his diplomatic powers as to produce a request that all ministerial letters should be written in the joint names of himself and his brother. 'A representative,' Nelson adds, 'may dictate to an admiral—a captain of a man-of-war would be censured for the same thing; therefore you will see the propriety of steering clear between the two situations.' Of course, all this had to be retailed to higher authorities. 'I send you a copy of the Turkish admiral's letter to me,' he writes to St. Vincent, 'and also the (I think I may call it impertinent) one of Sir Sidney Smith, and the very elegant one of the Emperor of Russia,' while to Spencer he complains that Smith is 'not so respectful as the rules of our service demand from the different ranks in it.'

A little later Nelson hears the alarming rumour that Smith has not only made himself a commodore, but has taken to hoisting the Royal Standard and having himself saluted with twenty-one guns, while his letters have become 'highly indecent.'

The tirades of the malcontents had now reached the Admiralty, and Spencer realised that he had made a mistake in not stating definitely to St. Vincent that Smith was to be under his and Nelson's command. Luckily he knew his admirals' dispositions uncommonly well, and so was able to provide the exact type of soothing syrup required for the occasion. 'Nothing could possibly give me more concern,' he wrote to St. Vincent, 'than that Lord Neslon should think me capable of taking any measure which I thought could in the most distant

manner convey any mortification to him.' And to Nelson he ended, 'I am aware you must have undergone very great fatigues and anxieties, but I trust that the brilliant successes which have hitherto attended, and with the approbation of Divine Providence, will, I hope ever continue to attend, your exertions in the service of your King and country, will make you ample amends for all your labours.' Spencer was a good First Lord.

VI

Smith, in the meantime, had decided to assist Djezzar Pasha by harassing Buonaparte's army as it marched up the Palestine coast, and also in the defence of Acre, which was to be held at all costs. On hearing of the storming of Jaffa his first move was to send the *Theseus* to Acre, bearing no less a person than Monsieur Phélypeaux, whom he recommended to Djezzar as a first-rate military engineer, and whom he created a colonel in order to impress the Turks. He also accepted an offer from an Albanian chief to provide an unlimited number of 'ambitious men' from the Morea to serve as marines. On 17th March he arrived at Acre in the *Tigre*, and found that, although the fortifications were completely obsolete, Phélypeaux had already strengthened the works considerably. He then sailed south on the look-out for Buonaparte's advance-guard, and on the evening of 17th March the *Tigre's* boats discovered it winding round the base of Mount Carmel. The troops, unsuspicious of any attack by sea, were close to the shore, and as the boats deluged them with grape from their small guns they ran up the mountain in great confusion. Seeing that they were unsupported by artillery, Smith rightly concluded that it

must be coming up the coast by sea, and next day a corvette and nine gunboats suddenly rounded Mount Carmel, and seven of the gunboats were instantly captured. They carried a train of the heaviest siege artillery, without which it would be extremely difficult to capture Acre, and also gun platforms and ammunition. Smith returned to Acre in triumph and mounted the guns on the walls, while he stationed the gunboats so as to worry Buonaparte's flanks.

The French, however, pushed forward with their usual resolution, and on 20th March opened the siege with field pieces only, of which they had about eighty. The Turkish garrison, together with the British marines whom Smith had landed, numbered scarcely 3,000, so that, with Buonaparte at their head, the French had every reason for optimism.

Moreover, Djezzar, although energetic, was somewhat inefficient in his methods and had refused to carry out many of Phélypeaux's recommendations, while most of his guns were mounted to fire out to sea. Consequently, the French were able to carry a mine right up to the main defences, which were already getting severely battered.

Nevertheless, Smith was able to make up for these deficiencies by anchoring the *Tigre*, *Theseus* and the gunboats in such a position that their guns enfiladed the French trenches on either side, right up to the walls. In addition, he captured one of their transports with a large cargo of rice, biscuits and flour, while forced to leave his position owing to a heavy gale.

Meanwhile, the French had made such progress with their mine that on 7th April a triple sortie was executed in which a party of sailors and marines from Smith's ships destroyed the mine, under cover of the Turkish assaults

on the enemy's trenches. The British party suffered 26 casualties, but were splendidly led by Lieutenant Wright and Major, alias Colonel, Douglas, another of Smith's promotions, 'to enable him to command the Turkish colonels.' But the French, not to be denied, reconstructed the mine, and on 25th April fired it, when they imagined themselves to be directly beneath one of the principal towers. A vault, however, upset their calculations and the tower was only partially damaged, and, though they gained a footing in it, they were repulsed with heavy loss.

But Buonaparte had meanwhile managed to get up some siege guns from Jaffa, which were brought by Admiral Perée, commanding the French frigates at Damietta, which had not been in the battle of Aboukir Bay. As the spring wore on the possibilities of British reinforcements arriving increased, and Buonaparte, with his extra guns, began to press the siege with reckless determination.

A great breach had been made in the walls where the mine had been exploded, and on 1st May a picked force of 2,000 troops attempted to enter it, under cover of a preliminary bombardment and simultaneous attacks from all the trenches. The Turks, however, were now thoroughly roused, and defended themselves heroically, doubtless impressed by Smith's threat that if they surrendered he would level Acre flat, in order to deny its use to the French. The ships' guns kept up a continuous fire, and the marines even constructed ravelins outside the walls, so that the French were again repulsed with exceptionally heavy loss.

For the next two days they made desperate attempts to capture the ravelins, but failed, and were heavily counter-attacked by the Turks, who began to act with increasing boldness. On 3rd May, the forty-sixth day of the siege,

Smith reported that the defences were in better order than at the beginning. Nevertheless, the British personnel was beginning to suffer from heat and exhaustion, and Col. Phélypeaux had died of fever, and the French, although losing hundreds of men a week, kept widening the breach and repairing the damage done to their batteries by working hard all night, despite the fiercest Turkish sorties.

All this time Smith had been waiting most anxiously for the Turkish reinforcements from Constantinople, which were concentrating at Rhodes. At last, on 7th May, a great fleet of corvettes and transports appeared on the horizon, under the command of Hassan Bey.

The French, seeing the reinforcements approaching, opened a tremendous fire, and Buonaparte, knowing that his last chance had come, ordered a final assault. He had just succeeded in getting a trench driven right up to the breach at the north-east angle of the walls, protected by sandbags and French corpses piled high on either side. His men advanced with reckless courage, and, though a murderous fire was directed on them from the ships and ravelins, they entered the breach, and by daylight on 8th May were in possession of the ruins of the tower.

Hassan Bey's ships lay becalmed seven miles out to sea, but his troops could be seen disembarking and pulling shorewards in boats. There was not an instant to lose, and Buonaparte called on every man who could stand to join in the assault.

The Turks were outnumbered and badly shaken, and only a remnant remained at the breach heroically repelling the French with heavy stones. Djezzar Pasha continued to distribute cartridges together with rewards for enemy heads with his usual meritorious calm, but his men were almost beaten.

SIR SIDNEY SMITH

From the picture by John Eckstein in the National Portrait Gallery.

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The crisis had come, and Smith called up his last reserves.

Leaving only just enough men to work the ships' guns, he landed at the head of a strong party of seamen and marines, armed with pikes, and dashed to the breach, where he was joined by Djezzar. The Turks grew frantic with fanatical enthusiasm, and those who were already retreating from their posts, crowded back to defend the breach. The French had almost overpowered the few gallant defenders when Smith arrived with his pikemen, and they continued to press forward through the mass of débris ; but they were held. A terrific hand-to-hand fight ensued in the breach, which Smith directed with unbounded energy and courage, though implored by Djezzar not to expose himself, till at last a great shout was heard from the shore, and the Sultan Selim's own Chifflick regiment of foot charged through the town.

After desperate fighting, the French were driven from the breach, and turned their attention to the garden of Djezzar's seraglio, which was on the edge of the ramparts. To Smith's annoyance, Djezzar refused to let the Sultan's regiment enter the garden, although only two hundred of his own Albanians were left alive to defend it. Smith therefore ordered the Sultan's colonel to make a sortie and capture the enemy's forward trenches, but the French, though temporarily repulsed, were massed together at this point, and drove the Turks back in frightful confusion. Mr. Bray, the *Tigre's* carpenter, covered their retreat with two of the ship's 68-pounder cannon mounted at the gates. A terrific fire was now directed against the weaker part of the wall, to the south of the original breach, and ' whole sheets of wall ' collapsed at every shot. As the sun began to set the last French reserves advanced ' with solemn step.' ' It was a grand and terrific spectacle,'

wrote Montholon ; ' the grenadiers rushed forward under a shower of balls. Kléber, with the gait of a giant, and his thick head of hair, had taken his post, sword in hand, on the bank of the breach, and animated the assailants. The noise of the cannon, the enthusiastic shouts, the rage of our soldiers and the yelling of the Turks, mingled themselves with the burst of his thundering voice.' Buonaparte himself could be clearly seen from the walls, standing on Richard Cœur-de-Lion's mount, directing the attack, surrounded by a distinguished group of generals. Djezzar took the bold step of leaving the breach undefended while he drew up his faithful Albanians in the garden below. The French were allowed to pour through the undefended breach, and were then suddenly set upon and hacked and stabbed to death.

' The English uniform had hitherto served as a rallying point for the old garrison wherever it appeared,' but, with the increasing dusk, the Turkish reinforcements mistook it for the French, and immense confusion ensued, several British officers nearly being killed. Luckily, however, ' calm was restored,' and, with the arrival of Hassan Bey and the main body of 12,000 troops, the French were completely routed. For the first time Buonaparte was defeated in person, and by a British post-captain, who called himself a commodore, and who was the *bête noir* of every senior officer in the Mediterranean.

' The town,' wrote Smith to St. Vincent, ' is not, nor ever has been, defensible, according to the rules of war ; but according to every other rule it must and shall be defended ; not that it is in itself worth while defending, but we feel that it is by the breach Buonaparte means to march to further conquest. 'Tis on the issue of this conflict that depends the opinion of the multitude of spectators on the surrounding hills, who wait only to see

how it ends, to join the victor ; and, with such a reinforcement for the execution of his known project, Constantinople and even Vienna must feel the shock. Though we may, and probably shall be overpowered, I can venture to say that the French army will be so much further weakened before it prevails as to be little able to profit by its dear-bought victory.'

It was a clear and modest statement, ungarnished with the sycophantic personal references usually offered to St. Vincent, or with the more apocalyptical ones previously offered to Cromwell. Yet Smith was always accused of being a boastful charlatan, and he certainly never hesitated to strike flamboyant attitudes at the most unreasonable moments.

Meanwhile, he was still trying to cut off Buonaparte's supplies. By placing Hassan Bey's two frigates to the south of the town, he was able to send the *Tigre* up to the north side to join the *Theseus*, and then to send the *Theseus* off to chase Perée's three frigates which were in the neighbourhood. But, unfortunately, Captain Miller was killed by an explosion of 'dud' French shells which had fallen in Acre, and which he kept in his cabin for experimenting with in order to use in his own guns.

Smith also conducted a vigorous propaganda amongst the Christians of Mount Lebanon, circulating copies of 'Buonaparte's impious proclamations, in which he boasts of having overthrown all Christian establishments, and I accompanied it by a suitable exhortation calling upon them to choose between the friendship of a Christian Knight and that of an unprincipled renegado.' The Mohammedan Druses were also urged to attack the French, presumably on the strength of Smith's commission as a Turkish general.

Buonaparte was now in a desperate position. He had already lost 12,000 men by death, wounds, and sickness, including eight generals ; his communications with Egypt were highly vulnerable ; and there were 10,000 tribesmen continually threatening his flank. Meanwhile, the garrison grew bolder, and, infuriated at the massacre of their friends at Jaffa, kept making fierce sorties and decapitating their enemies with sabres and knives. Buonaparte still kept up his attacks, and even stooped to make one under cover of a flag of truce, sent in to arrange for the burying of the French corpses, rotting before the breach. But at last he saw he was beaten, and on the night of 20th May began his retreat to Egypt, encumbered with masses of wounded and leaving his 24- and 18-pounder guns and mortars abandoned before the walls of Acre.

As soon as Buonaparte reached Jaffa he embarked his wounded, without water or provisions, in local crafts, together with his 12- and 8-pounder guns and howitzers. But the whole flotilla, instead of trying to reach Damietta, steered straight for the *Tigre*, and not only surrendered, but implored Smith's assistance. Buonaparte evacuated Jaffa on 25th May, leaving hundreds of his men dead of fever, spread by the putrid corpses of the massacred Turkish garrison. All the way from Acre to Gaza the exhausted columns came under a merciless fire from Smith's boats as they wound their way along the beach. At Gaza they turned inland, only to be harassed by hordes of tribesmen, and on 2nd June they reached El Arish. Here Buonaparte left a rear-guard to cover his retreat, and then withdrew the rest of his men to Cairo, while Smith made a secret pilgrimage to the cave of the Annunciation at Nazareth to return thanks 'for our late wonderful success.'

Meanwhile, the campaign of abuse to which Smith's

exuberant energy had laid him open continued unhindered in the western Mediterranean. St. Vincent and Nelson, ably seconded by their satellites, Troubridge and Ball, fumed and expostulated unceasingly, while the bigwigs at Whitehall explained, condoled, consoled and explained again. Moreover, for the first time they really had something to talk about beyond affronts to their seniority, for Smith had incautiously made an announcement which was not only unwelcome to naval opinion, but was directly contrary to the considered policy of the government. For he had let it be known that he not only thought that the French were a direct menace to the British Empire as long as they remained in Egypt, but that, in order to be rid of them, he was willing to let them return to France on practically any terms they liked.

Here was a rich opportunity for delivering a really telling reprimand, and on 18th March Nelson ordered him ' never to give any French ship or men leave to quit Egypt ' except as prisoners of war. Nelson also refused ' to pay the smallest attention ' to Frenchmen bearing Smith's passports, a sample form of which he had just received through Troubridge. It was certainly a rather provocative document, especially to a man of Nelson's temperament, who combined to a surprising degree the opposite qualities of independence and attention to discipline. It ran as follows :

De par le Chevalier Sidney Smith, Grand Croix de l'Ordre Royal et Militaire de l'Epée de Suede, Ministre Plénipotentiare de Sa Majesté Britannique près la Porte Ottomane et Chef de son Escadre dans les Mers de Levant.

Tous Amiraux, Généraux et Officiers, tant Militaires que Civiles de Sa Majesté Britannique, ceux de ses Alliés et ses Puissances amies. . . .

W. Sidney Smith,

par Ordre John Keith, Secrétaire.

On the same day, hearing that reinforcements were required for Minorca, Nelson sent another letter to Smith demanding the *Theseus* and the *Lion* (from the blockade of Alexandria) as soon as Smith obtained as many as three of the line from the Turks. Luckily the possibility of complying with this order did not occur till July, but, in any case, it is doubtful if Smith would have submitted to the denuding of his command while defending Acre. Nelson followed this up with a letter to St. Vincent: 'The victory of the Nile would in my opinion be useless if any ship or Frenchman is suffered to return to Europe. I hope you will approve of my conduct; for as a captain to an admiral, either Sidney Smith or myself must give way.'

Next, St. Vincent began scolding Smith for promising the Turks the assistance of more British ships than it was possible to spare, and thanked him sarcastically for 'allowing me to read your last letter to his lordship [Spencer]. I recommend that all communications in future be made to Lord Nelson, as I cannot approve of a captain, having a detached squadron under his orders, carrying on a public correspondence through any other medium.' He then tackled Spencer on the conditions under which Smith was originally appointed, alleging that he imagined the Government intended Smith to have a completely independent command, and how 'alarming' Smith's 'indiscretion' was for Nelson 'and the meritorious captains serving under his orders.' On 27th April he wrote again that 'my only apprehension is that Sir Sidney, completely enveloped in the importance of his ambassadorial character, will not attend to the military part of his profession; I have the more dread of this because I know the *Tigre* to be in a woeful state of discipline.' To Nelson he replied

full of anger at Smith's hoisting a commodore's broad pendant without leave. 'I foresee both you and I,' he concluded, 'will be drawn into a *tracasserie* about this gentleman, who, having the ear of Ministers, and telling his story better than we can, will be more attended to.' Certainly Smith had a better story to tell of his activities in the spring of 1799 than St. Vincent and Nelson had to tell of theirs.

It was naturally easy for St. Vincent, snugly ensconced in Rosia House, Gibraltar, to scold Smith by letter and abuse him to Spencer, but his conduct in so doing was hardly in harmony with his professed intention of providing his subordinate with every possible support in breaking the French hold on Egypt. Moreover, he was not even aware of what was actually happening at the moment, as Troubridge, his latest enlightener, merely stated that 'I believe Buonaparte is gone to Syria,' adding characteristically: 'I left Sir Sidney, giving him everything he could want that he might not be able to say the blame lays on Lord Nelson if he should not succeed. Sir Sidney talks so large as a member of the Divan and "Plenipo," that he made me sick.' Finally Nelson cautioned the British Minister at Florence and the British Consul at Corfu to beware of Smith's nefarious projects, adding to the last-named: 'An idea seems gone abroad, very injurious to my credit in the world, that although I am entrusted with the command of the detached squadron, even into the Black Sea, should the French have got there; that although I had the happiness of commanding the squadron who obtained the glorious victory off the Nile, Captain Sir William Sidney Smith was sent out to command somewhere in prejudice to me and four or five captains now serving with me in the Levant.' It seems odd that Nelson, in urging his

opinion, should show such immodest tenderness for the 'glorious victory,' when it was his squadron's unfortunate inability to complete its work by capturing the remainder of Buonaparte's ships on the coast that made Smith's position at Acre so precarious.

'Great talkers do the least, we see,' he had previously said of Smith, when remarking that the Toulon fleet was at sea, because Smith 'did not burn them all.' In the spring of 1799 it was Smith who was the principal man of action in the Mediterranean. But at the moment when the French were preparing their first big attack in the breach at Acre, Nelson was feeding St. Vincent with a long account of operations of quite secondary importance, directed towards supporting the decadent and treacherous monarchy of Naples. 'I am very much displeased with the Levant commodore,' was all he could say of Smith. 'I send one of his passports; we are not forced to understand French.'

Luckily Smith was well supported by the Ministers at home, but even they became a trifle anxious when they found that his treaty with the Porte practically committed them to sending strong reinforcements and allowing the French army to retire to Europe. 'Sir Sidney appears to be of opinion,' wrote Spencer to Grenville on 7th May, 'that the disadvantage of his latter measure will be done away, by their being considered as prisoners of war; but I cannot see it in that light, because the instant they set feet either in France or Italy, they will make very little scruple of serving either against us or some of our allies, and if it was only for the sake of example, I should be extremely sorry that any considerable proportion of that army were ever to return in any conditions.' That was Spencer's

attitude; he disapproved of Smith's policy and wished to keep the French in Egypt till they died, but he was not in the least worried by the idea of betraying the Nile, though he was naturally influenced by what St. Vincent and Nelson said. In any case, he treated Smith as an able subordinate whose 'opinion' was worth considering, and not as an unscrupulous school cricketer, sent to play a clandestine match by the headmaster, in which he assumed first eleven colours without authority.

Meanwhile, Smith had corresponded with St. Vincent at frequent intervals in a perfectly straightforward and respectful manner, and, now that the French were beaten and he had more time for calm reflection, he set about making his peace with Nelson. On 31st May he wrote Nelson a private letter, in which he disclaimed any intentional disrespect to his lordship, and expressed his deep regret at their not having met at Syracuse. He then defended his own action under the terms of his appointment, and urged the necessity of having a strong force in the Levant, such as could not only 'show example,' but also 'command respect and enforce obedience' from the Turks. He also explained that his apparent insubordinate conduct, for which he offered a handsome apology, was due to his being compelled to take the initiative under the terms of the treaty with the Porte, without which action the British force would have been only a junior partner in the alliance. 'I shall not, of course, deviate from the very confined line your lordship has traced for me as captain of the *Tigre*,' he continued, but submitted that he must still be allowed discretionary power, since he was now in command of the Turkish fleet and army operating against the French, not by virtue of his captaincy of the *Tigre*, 'but as the

King of Great Britain's Minister and member of the council which decided the armament.'

To St. Vincent he also wrote privately making humble apology for having done anything 'inadvertently' 'to occasion so severe a reprimand' and begging for guidance in future 'rather in the form of a friendly and fatherly admonition, than with the severity I at present experience at your hands.'

It is fairly evident that another reason for his delay in making these contrite apologies was his desire to have achieved something in the meanwhile which would make his position unassailable, and his delay was justified. But Nelson could not let the subject alone; it was fast becoming with him a King Charles's head. 'Not one officer in the service more fully appreciates the value of your brother, as a sea-officer, on every occasion, which have been very numerous,' he writes to Spencer Smith on 5th June (not very grammatically). 'Having said this, it may readily be conceived that I could not like to have any *junior* in some measure placed, if not over my head, at least as taking from my consequence. I did not think that it was necessary for any sea-officer to be joined in signing a treaty which you had brought to such a happy issue; but that if it was, I shall ever think that sea-officer should have been Nelson.'

As soon, however, as news of Smith's successes spread to the Western Mediterranean, Nelson could no longer refrain from praising him in the most generous terms. 'We had the great pleasure,' he wrote on 24th July, 'of hearing that your truly meritorious and wonderful exertions were in a fair train for the extirpation of that horde of thieves who went to Egypt with that arch-thief, Buonaparte.'

To John Spencer Smith, on 25th July, he wrote, 'I

can assure you, no one admires his gallantry and judgment more than myself. But if I know myself, as I never have encroached on the command of others, so I will not suffer even my friend Sir Sidney to encroach upon mine!'

And finally, on hearing of Buonaparte's complete defeat, he wrote: 'The immense fatigue you have had in defending Acre against such a chosen army of French villains, headed by that arch-villain Buonaparte, has never been exceeded, and the bravery shown by you and your brave companions is such as to merit every encomium which all the civilised world can bestow. As an individual, and as an admiral, will you accept of my feeble tribute of praise and admiration and make them acceptable to all under your command? . . . Be assured, my dear Sir Sidney, of my perfect esteem and regard, and do not let anyone persuade you to the contrary. But my character is, that I will not suffer the smallest tittle of my command to be taken from me.'

In short, 'For always I am Cæsar.'

There is no doubt that at this time Nelson had become so engulfed in the affairs of Naples, where he played an even stronger diplomatic part than Smith, that he could not bring himself to see the Levant operations in their true setting. Moreover, in June, St. Vincent was relieved of the Mediterranean command by Lord Keith, a stiff and uncompromising autocrat, with ideas of his own on Mediterranean strategy, and Nelson's reign as uncrowned king of Naples was at an end.

In England, however, Smith's exploits were viewed in a more true and generous setting, which is best expressed in a letter of Spencer's, in which he says: 'You will most probably, by the same conveyance which brings you this letter, be officially informed of the great, and,

I believe, unprecedented honour which has been paid you, by the thanks of the House of Commons for your services before Acre, which thanks I propose also to move in the House of Lords on the first day they sit after their present adjournment. I call this an unprecedented honour, because I do not believe there is an instance of an officer, of no higher rank than a captain, being either mentioned in so pointed a manner in the King's speech as you have been, and being thanked by Parliament. However, as you have thought fit to move out of the common and ordinary line, even of brilliant service, it is very proper for us to move out of the usual practice of remuneration. I have the satisfaction of adding that it is not intended that the thanks should be barren of some substantial advantage, as it is in contemplation to bring forward a measure for granting you a pecuniary compensation, the exact mode or even *quantum* of which is not yet fixed, but I rather believe it will be a parliamentary pension of £500 a year.'

The thanks of Parliament was accordingly moved in the most generous terms in both Houses, and carried unanimously, while the pension was fixed at £1,000 a year. Smith also received the thanks of the City of London, and the Levant Company, together with a piece of plate. The Sultan of Turkey gave him a pelisse and also a *chelengk* similar to the one awarded to Nelson, but with only seven rays instead of thirteen.

VII

Although British and Turkish honours were showered upon him, Smith's task was by no means complete, the possibility of capturing or destroying Buonaparte's army being as remote as ever. For, though his range

of action was now definitely limited, his position in Egypt was one of great strength, only to be broken by a powerful combined operation. Nor was there any chance of turning his rear, since our naval forces, under Blankett and Rainier in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, were only just sufficient to prevent him reaching India, whence no British troops could be spared.

Smith had meanwhile sailed north to Beyrout to persuade the local rulers to support Djezzar Pasha and from there went to Cyprus for fresh water and supplies. Smith now heard that a Turkish fleet of thirteen battleships commanded by Patrona Bey, and an army of 8,000 men, under Mustapha Pasha Seraskier, were on their way to reinforce Acre. They were, of course, weeks late, so he ordered them to proceed at once off Alexandria and take up the blockade of Buonaparte's army. They arrived in Aboukir Bay on 11th July, and, finding the castle weakly garrisoned, the Pasha landed and took it by storm four days later. Smith had sent Mr. John Bromley, now Major Bromley, to urge the Turks to occupy Rosetta and Damietta with their troops and Aboukir Bay with their fleet. Instead, they crowded their whole force on to the Aboukir peninsula, where their only chance of success against Buonaparte's superior forces lay in digging themselves in right across from sea to sea. This they refused to do even when Smith arrived on 20th July with Hassan Bey and about 2,000 men from Acre.

Buonaparte, seeing his opportunity, advanced from Ramanieh in overwhelming numbers and attacked the Turkish lines on the morning of 25th July. Except for the remains of the Chifflick regiment, which was highly trained and disciplined, the Turks were mostly

irregulars, and collapsed before the audacious attacks of Buonaparte's cavalry, who jumped their horses over the shallow Turkish trenches. Smith protected the Turks' flanks as well as he could by firing from his boats, but the Turkish gunboats and launches refused to co-operate. The troops were in great need of water, with which Smith tried to supply them ; but they stove in most of the casks as soon as they were brought ashore, and then used them as rafts to try to escape on. Scores were driven into the sea and drowned, and by noon Buonaparte had gained a smashing victory, having captured the Pasha together with his artillery, tents and stores. He then returned in triumph to Cairo, bearing with him the luckless Pasha.

Smith was annoyed : the second battle of Aboukir Bay had done nothing to challenge the reputation of the first, and the Turks were severely shaken.

He therefore decided that the best plan was to send Buonaparte, under a flag of truce, all the latest news from Europe up to 10th June. This included despatches and newspapers amongst which were definite orders from the Directory for Buonaparte to return home at once, owing to the desperate situation created by the reverses on the Rhine and in North Italy, and to take command of the entire forces of the Republic. Buonaparte would thus become aware of the perilous situation of the Directory, and would therefore be tempted to return to France by stealth, leaving his army in Egypt. From this, two results might follow. With luck, he might be captured at sea, and, in any case, Kléber would be left in command. ' If so,' wrote Smith to Spencer, ' Kléber will yield to the clamour of the army and treat for a passage home, when there is force enough collected against him to justify such a measure, and the means of conveying them

on the spot. He is a soldier, and no speculator on the conquest of India or on the fertility of the new colony; he had rather be on the Rhine than anywhere else, and all the rest had rather be anywhere else than in Egypt. Of this I have acquired proofs by our intercourse with them of late, and it is a pity not to be able to press them hard enough to make them decide on the evacuation. As to taking Alexandria by siege, it is practicable only by regular European troops. . . . If once completely blockaded by land as well as by sea, since there is nothing but rice in the town, the garrison would have to choose between that food with bad water and a passage home, and would no doubt prefer the latter. This is our only chance of taking that place; and as to Upper Egypt, the Mamelukes must try to rout Desaix out of the Fagum, but it will be a well-fought contest, for that division has taken root in that fertile country, and it really is a flourishing colony under an orderly military Government, raising revenue from the peasantry and wanting nothing but wine to make them satisfied. I mention to Lord Grenville a means of attacking them by the homeward bound conquerors of Seringapatam, coming up the Red Sea with the spring monsoon. . . .'

Smith sent his flag of truce on 6th August, and then spread the British and Turkish ships to the west and north so that Buonaparte 'might embark when the coast was apparently clear.' But again he had no luck, for on 21st August, Buonaparte escaped from Egypt, accompanied by Berthier, Lannes, Marmont, Murat and other generals. They sailed in two frigates, and reached Fréjus on 9th October.

Reckoning that the French army would now be somewhat depressed in morale, Smith attempted a landing near Damietta. Patrona Bey had unfortunately been

assassinated at Cyprus by the Turkish janissaries, and the fleet was now commanded by Seid Ali Bey, who, under Smith's direction, approached the coast on 29th October. A heavy bombardment was opened on the French shore defences, and, after their usual delays, the Turks landed on 1st November. The French had had sufficient time to collect in force, but the Turks, sabre in hand, completely routed their leading infantry, when the Turkish reserves, under Osman Aga, unwilling to be left out, charged without orders, completely disorganising the Turkish force, which was now deployed, in the greatest confusion. Kléber threw in his cavalry on the Turks' left, and in a few minutes they were driven into the sea, eleven hundred being captured. The French losses were not known ; ' but it must have been sufficient,' wrote Smith to Nelson, ' to convince them that such victories as these, against troops which, though irregular, will fight hand to hand with them, must cost them dear in the end—a truth I, of course, endeavour to impress on them in order to induce them to come to terms of evacuation without further effusion of blood. I have opened a correspondence with the French commander-in-chief on this subject, which bids fair to come to a satisfactory issue, as I find I have a liberal, humane man to deal with in General Kléber.'

But, despite the slow yet inevitable success of this campaign of attrition, there were already signs that the Turks were themselves proving unwilling instruments and would be equally glad to see the French gone, with their heads still on their shoulders. This naturally caused fresh anxiety to the British Government, who decided to send out Lord Elgin to Constantinople as Minister plenipotentiary to succeed the brothers Smith. An immediate explosion in Levantine politics was avoided

by Lord Elgin's tactful demeanour, his first communication to Smith being little more than a polite rambling news-letter, in which he contented himself with the remark, 'I feel myself doubly called upon to recommend every possible means that can aid in forcing the French out of Egypt and prevent the loss of time on the part of the Turks, which the French evidently aim at gaining.'

But at home, feeling in the Cabinet was hardening, and on 12th December Pitt informed Dundas that they had 'agreed on sending immediate orders to our officers in the Mediterranean to disregard any convention for suffering the French to return from Egypt,' and the same day Spencer wrote to Smith that he hoped the instructions would arrive in time 'to enable you and our other officers in the Mediterranean to prevent the bad consequences which would inevitably arise from the return of so considerable a number of well-trained and seasoned troops to the theatre of war in Europe.'

If either Elgin or Spencer suspected that it was Smith who was playing the leading part in making a 'convention,' they were tactful enough to lay the blame on the Turks and to hope for the best.

Nelson, meanwhile, had chosen to assume that the whole campaign was finished, at least as far as the British were concerned, and had written to Smith as far back as 4th October that 'the Admiralty hope, with all the civilised world, from the consequences of your great exertion and bravery at St. Jean d'Acre, that all the French are destroyed in Egypt, together with their shipping, etc. I am, therefore, particularly instructed to direct you, that if this has happily taken place, all the English ships are to join me.' And on 24th October, hearing that the operations still continued, he condescendingly remarked

that 'the details . . . will . . . ever reflect upon you and your brave companions the highest honour . . . and, my dear sir, you shall ever find that, although I am zealous of having a particle of my honour abridged, yet that no commanding officer will be so ready to do everything you can wish.'

He had succeeded in getting his own views accepted by the Government—namely, that the French should never be allowed to leave Egypt except as prisoners of war—and he knew that in this case he would receive as much support from Keith as he would have had from St. Vincent.

But while the united efforts of British diplomacy and strategy were being concentrated on this important object, Smith was on the point of succeeding according to an opposite plan. Taking a strong force of Turks to the east of the Nile, he helped them to capture El Arish on 29th December by a brilliant combined operation. Nothing had been done in the way of sending troops from England during the most favourable months for landing operations, but with the fall of El Arish the French could never feel secure from the Syrian tribes, and Kléber decided to negotiate, and appointed commissioners.

This was Smith's triumph, towards which he had been working for weeks past by hints and promises contained in his correspondence with Kléber about prisoners. Opposing commanders-in-chief always corresponded at great length on this subject even during the most strenuous campaigns, and Smith had used his opportunities to good effect.

'Though measures have been taken for surrounding the French army on all sides,' he wrote magnificently to the French commissioners, 'yet its bravery, courage and fame, remaining still unconquered, give them full right

to believe that they may yet be able to resist for some time. They are, therefore, by no means in a situation that should oblige them to capitulate ; they are fully entitled to retain their arms and baggage. The means to enable them to evacuate Egypt shall be procured to them. The ports of their destination cannot be other but French.'

Chivalry to an exiled and blockaded foe could scarcely go further, and Kléber was delighted. He appointed General Desaix and Monsieur Poussielgue as plenipotentiaries to treat with Smith and the Grand Vizier of Turkey. They began by demanding the retention of Malta and the Venetian islands for the French Republic, but ended by signing the famous Convention of El Arish, on 24th January, 1800, by which they were allowed to return home at once with all their weapons, baggage and stores, in their own transports and in others hired from the Turks. ' The great object of our operations in this quarter,' wrote Smith to Nelson, ' being the recovery of Egypt for our ally, and the security of the British possessions in India, advantages not to be compared to trifling sacrifices ; I doubt not but your lordship will agree with me, that the utmost has been obtained by negotiation that could have been acquired by victory, where it cannot be the intention to destroy, or even humiliate, a brave enemy unnecessarily ; besides, it must be borne in mind that a disciplined veteran army, however dissatisfied with its situation, if driven to desperation, might long keep possession of an insulated country, full of dykes and canals, which render it difficult of access, although it might in the end be overpowered by the resources of three empires when brought forward.'

Now, with Elgin's appearance, Smith's appointment as joint Minister to the Sublime Porte had come to an end, but so desirous was he of carrying through his policy with

regard to the French that he blandly ignored the Ambassador at Constantinople, and continued to act as plenipotentiary and commodore. For, although he had not himself signed the Convention, it being solely an arrangement between the French and the Turks, he had certainly acted as one holding plenipotentiary powers when recommending it for their acceptance.

Even before the Convention was signed, Elgin was bewailing to Nelson that Smith 'continues this title [of Minister plenipotentiary] without confirmation, instructions or powers from home, and he has exerted it upon different occasions to exercise policy in Cyprus and elsewhere, a fact literally without precedent in diplomatic history. This has brought upon our arms the utmost ill-will. It serves as an apology for backwardness in the Turks, and has given occasion to most unpleasant scenes in the seraglio, where we have of necessity enemies to our alliance. . . . Sir Sidney now attempts to take into his own hands the negotiations for evacuating Egypt, begun by the commanders of the Turkish and French armies, and proposes not only to have it on board of his own ship, away from the Grand Vizier, but also without any Turk of distinction as plenipotentiary with him. . . . Profession of private feeling would be greatly misplaced in my correspondence with your lordship, but I declare there exists not a man for whom I entertain a greater partiality than Sir S. Smith, nor whose conduct I would, and have, taken more conscientious care to support. It is only after this that I apply to your lordship. He has already distinguished himself so eminently in his professional line, and has so fine a field before him, that he certainly requires nothing more than to have his duty pointed out to him.'

Poor Lord Elgin was neither jealous nor spiteful, but

he was Ambassador, and Smith's conduct really did make things a little difficult. But Smith was not the man to allow mere departmental caprice to take from him the honour and satisfaction of negotiating on behalf of His Britannic Majesty a treaty of peace between a general officer of the French Republic and the Sultan of Turkey. Commodores did not have such a chance every day, let alone substantive post-captains !

He therefore wrote Elgin several soothing notes on Egyptian policy, pointing out the importance of holding the Turks to the terms of the Convention lest they should be tempted to massacre the French army by treachery. ' The great national object is attained,' he announced, ' if we can get the French army out of the country, even if they took the pyramids with them. I have made my sacrifice towards this object, which is no less than one fourth of all possible captures, being my personal share.'

Rumours of the impending Convention had been received in London with the utmost consternation, and Keith was instructed to inform Kléber that the Cabinet had received ' positive orders from His Majesty not to consent to any capitulation with the French troops which you command in Eygpt and Syria, at least unless they lay down their arms, surrender themselves prisoners of war, and deliver up all the ships and stores of the port of Alexandria to the Allied Powers.' Nor were any French troops to depart for France before they had been exchanged, while any troops or ships attempting to do so, bearing unauthorised passports [Smith's], would be seized as prisoners of war and prizes.

But Smith was incorrigible, and, on reading Keith's instructions, wrote to Spencer that ' being much pressed by Lord Elgin to get the French out of Egypt on any terms, " considering," as his lordship expresses himself,

" the state of European Politics," and the evidence of that necessity being much greater in the Turkish camp than can be conceived by anybody who has not seen the multitude of barbarians within an inch of famine or insurrection, I exerted myself to the utmost and succeeded in bringing about what I considered to be a more desirable termination of this question ; when I was thunderstruck to meet information which showed me that my superiors at a distance reasoned differently from those nearer the theatre of our operations.' The French army, he continued, ' was more to be feared in Egypt as a revolutionary colony than when blended in the mass of the population of France, and forming therein a very great addition to the discontented party. I have no doubt Buonaparte dreads their return, lest their disaffection to him should extend to the rest of the army. . . . I could not but close with them on the only terms on which they could and would give up their rich possession. . . . As an honest man I cannot but deprecate a breach of faith, and as a faithful well-meaning servant I dread the disapprobation of those I thought I was pleasing most completely, at the same time I cannot conscientiously act in contradiction to myself or suppress what it is my duty to state, as the grounds on which the arrangement as it stands was made, and ought to be preserved. It is doubtful, now that they have a loophole to creep out of by Lord Keith's letter to them, whether they will not profit by it on their side to avoid Buonaparte's displeasure. It they were landed in France in a body subject to it, they must necessarily either throw themselves in the scale against him to avoid persecution, or he must submit to their influence and keep terms with them to prevent being overthrown. . . . Whether in France or in the desert, I never can lose sight of the

great end of all our labours, the oversetting their infernal system. I have worked at it with some success here. I undermined Buonaparte by my influence on the opinion of the army successfully, and I meant to preserve that line to the end, but if I am now to be accused of the blackest perfidy and denied, as I necessarily must be, the means of justification, which would on the other hand be a breach of confidence towards you, there is an end of the influence I had acquired, and I am again reduced to shot and shell, of which I have no great quantity to produce the desired and intended effect.'

He then asked to be employed 'nearer Buonaparte's whiskers,' but there too with some 'latitude' of action. 'I beg too of your lordship's friendship, not to be placed under the command of double dealers whether political or military: but when the object is defined and the land marked, that I may be allowed to put myself towards obtaining it, according to the means before me, and the obstacle which a nearer view can at once render distinguishable.'

Seldom has the defence of the acts of the man on the spot been expressed with more vigour and less penitence.

To Keith, who after all was only Spencer's intermediary, Smith was more conciliatory in tone; in fact, he treated his commander-in-chief as an amiable idiot, who must have affairs of high policy explained to him in simple words. 'I own,' he wrote on 13th March, 'in my office of mediator, in this business, it never entered into my ideas that *we* could put any obstacle in the way of an arrangement, so very beneficial to us in a *general* view, and which evidently could not take place on any terms disgraceful to a veteran, unbeaten, and even uninvested army. As to disarming them, and persuading them to surrender as *prisoners*, not on

parole, I assure your lordship it was perfectly out of the question. . . . He [Buonaparte] wishes the army to remain in this country, far from himself, whom they both despise and detest, for all his conduct here, and his ultimate desertion of them, composed as they are, of the dissatisfied part of the army, which the Republican tyrants wished to get rid of. . . . I have the most positive ground for saying that Kléber is a most determined and dreaded opponent. . . . M. Poussielgue is himself one of the most liberal men I ever conversed with ; we have gone occasionally very deep in the question of probabilities, as to the future form of government under which France may ultimately make and preserve peace, which is naturally the object of his thoughts, wishes and labours in his civil line. . . . Believe me, my dear lord, there is no way of finishing this long contest, in which we are engaged, but by putting our opponents one against the other. . . . I cannot conclude this long letter without thanking your lordship for your very feeling and friendly consideration of my present situation, in this delicate business, and for kindly anticipating my natural desire, not to be myself employed in the breach of the convention.'

On 26th March the Cabinet heard the terms of the Convention, and realised that Smith had forestalled them. In fact, their letter to Kléber of 8th January, sent through Keith, crossed Smith's announcement that it was already signed. All the Ministers, including Spencer, were dumbfounded. Their first impulse was to repudiate the whole business, recall Smith and continue fighting, but a further consideration convinced them that this would appear in the eyes of the world as a most monstrous breach of faith.

Moreover, they had reason to suspect that the Turks

intended to violate its terms in any case, and that the whole French army were liable to be treacherously massacred unless Smith was upheld.

Spencer therefore sent Keith special instructions in which he was informed that, in addition to the objectionable nature of the terms, 'His Majesty does not consider Captain Sir Sidney Smith as having been authorised either to enter into, or to sanction, any such agreement in His Majesty's name, that officer having no special authority for that purpose. . . . But as the general commanding the enemy's troops appears to have treated him as a person whom he *bona fide* conceived to possess such authority, and as part of the treaty was immediately to be executed by the enemy, so that by annulling this transaction (so far as His Majesty's officer was a party thereto) the enemy could not be replaced in the same situation in which he before stood, His Majesty from a scrupulous regard to the public faith, has judged it proper that this officer should abstain from any act inconsistent with the engagements to which Sir Sidney Smith has erroneously given the sanction of His Majesty's name.'

Keith was, therefore, to respect all Smith's passports given to the French, but, on the other hand, the King 'does not feel himself bound to authorise his officers to take any active part in it [the Convention] or to furnish any convoy or transports for its execution.' Smith, therefore, was to be allowed to uphold his treaty, but he would have to execute it entirely on his own resources.

In the meantime Kléber had had time to digest the Cabinet's letter, sent through Keith, intimating that his army could only return to France as prisoners of war. Realising that the Cabinet had taken this decision some weeks before the Convention was signed, he saw that

they would be quite justified in completely repudiating its terms. He therefore decided to forestall them by repudiating the Convention himself, and fighting between the French and Turkish armies recommenced on 20th March. Both sides imagined that they had been duped, and reacted characteristically, the Turks fighting very half-heartedly and the French with increased determination. After a furious action at Heliopolis, the whole Turkish army retired defeated to Jaffa, and the British Ministers found that, owing to their failure, either to control Smith effectively or to give him a free hand, they were worse off than ever. Our allies, too, were becoming decidedly restive over this quasi-diplomatic *démarche*, and the Russian Ambassador was only to be pacified by receiving Grenville's assurance that Smith would soon be employed 'elsewhere.'

Instructions had been repeatedly sent to Keith since January suggesting that Smith should be withdrawn from the Levant, but he was in no hurry to obey them. In the first place, he had no one else to send, with sufficient prestige and ability to co-operate with the Turks, and also he was disinclined to incur the responsibility of withdrawing his most brilliant officer from his station until he knew for certain what the Ministers really intended to do about Egypt. But this was just what proved so difficult to decide upon, and consequently Keith was left guessing. Would a large Levant squadron be formed? If so, who would command it? What was to become of the blockade of Malta meanwhile? What was to happen if the Russians tried to take Corsica? What on earth was Nelson doing at Palermo? It was a difficult time for Keith, and for the moment he discreetly left Smith alone.

Smith, of course, knew exactly what ought to be done,

and on 21st April he explained the position to Elgin with his usual lucidity and vigour. The war in Egypt and Syria, he declared, was rapidly becoming a deadlock, the Turks being quite useless in regular operations against trained troops, and the French being divided amongst themselves as to their future policy, Kléber still favouring evacuation, while others were willing to remain and form a permanent French colony. Both sides had now the strongest reasons for distrusting the British, and therefore, as their fighting spirit declined, what was more likely than that they should make a separate peace, by which the French would hold Egypt as vassals of the Porte ?

Elgin must, therefore, exert himself to obtain some properly formulated policy from home, which would prevent the threatened Franco-Turkish alliance. This must be done, either by allowing the French to return home according to the terms of El Arish, or else by sending a strong force of British troops to make them prisoners of war.

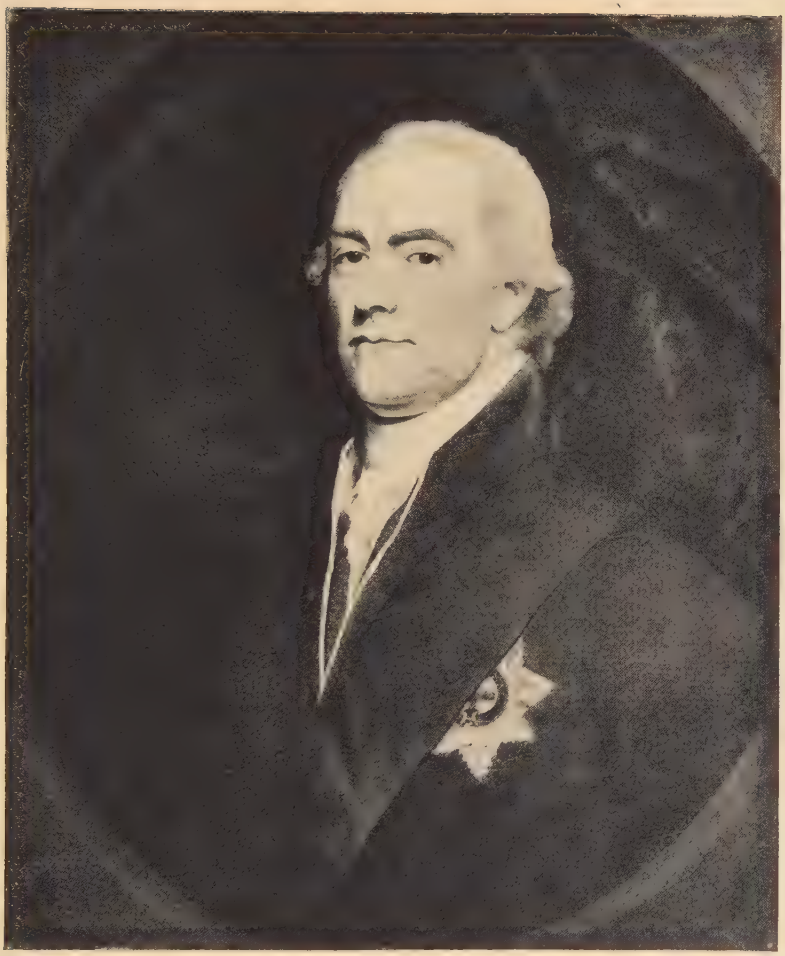
At this stage, Kléber was murdered in Cairo by a janissary, and the command of the French army devolved on General Menon, the leader of the colonist party, who had gone so far as to marry locally and turn Mohammedan. Although a somewhat incompetent general, his opposition to the policy of evacuation was a serious matter, and it began to look less likely than ever that the French could be dislodged from Egypt except by a strong force of British troops. But Smith was willing to try diplomacy once more, and on 28th June wrote to Menon, pointing out that the Cabinet's objectionable orders of 8th January were sent in ignorance of the El Arish negotiations, and might easily have been withdrawn if Kléber himself had not broken the Convention.

'As the admiral, under whose order I am, is some distance from me, I am authorised to subscribe to such arrangements, as circumstances may render necessary. I shall fulfil to the letter all the precise instructions that I have from my Court. I know its principles to be founded on the most exact equity and the most perfect loyalty, and my conduct will be conformable to its principles, and all my efforts will tend to fulfil my duty as a disinterested servant.'

It is uncertain whether these remarks were part of a gigantic piece of bluff which Smith was attempting to practice on Menon, or whether they were inspired solely by his own megalomania. He had now no powers whatever from his 'Court' to negotiate, and, in addition, he had just been severely reprimanded for an extended and ill-advised use of such powers after they had been officially revoked.

The admiral 'some distance' away, and the Ministers further off still, would have exploded violently if they had known what he was doing, and also that the Grand Vizier of Turkey had just invested Smith with completely new plenary powers, on behalf of the Porte, which, of course, under the circumstances, he had no right to accept. But, unfortunately for Smith, Menon, who was not to be drawn, stipulated that any treaty made by him must also have the sanction 'of the Consuls who govern the French Republic,' and the negotiations therefore came to an end.

But as the desultory land fighting and blockade trailed on for a second time into the stifling Levantine summer, Smith received great satisfaction from a letter of 17th August from Spencer, in which his conduct at El Arish was not only exonerated, but approved. 'I shall satisfy myself by saying in general,' wrote Spencer, 'that your



GEORGE EARL SPENCER

FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY 1794–1801.

From the picture by John Singleton Copley in the National Portrait Gallery.

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explanations and defence are so far completely satisfactory to my mind as to prove that you have throughout acted in the manner which to you appeared the best, and though I think you have been under an error with respect to the continuation of your power as a plenipotentiary (an error by the by into which I am not surprised that you were led by the communications from Lord Elgin), and though I also differ considerably with you in the opinion you seem to have formed of the probable result of the return of Kléber's army into France, I cannot help allowing that you acted upon very strong grounds, and that upon the whole, if it had been possible that we could have been in complete possession of all these grounds for the purpose of forming our determination on the subject, the Convention of El Arish would most probably have been carried into execution. . . . I think it would now be impossible for any one not to allow that the policy of that Convention was such as to recommend its ratification.'

Thus, in the end, Smith was acknowledged to have acted sensibly, although at first he had nearly been sacrificed to placate the feelings of Russia and Austria. But when the French broke the Convention, the folly of having boycotted it ourselves became apparent, and Spencer had sufficient generosity to admit the prescience of the man who had flouted Nelson and St. Vincent. Later, when Egypt had swallowed 17,000 British troops and was still unsatisfied, the value of Smith's original policy became even more apparent.

In August 1800, however, there was no further chance of favourable negotiations with Menon, and the Ministers had still not reached a decision as to their next move. Smith still attempted to blockade the whole Egyptian coast with the *Tigre*, the *Theseus* having been ordered to

join Keith, while Menon and the Turks watched each other across the burning sands round Cairo.

Now, it so happened that in May a small British army left Portsmouth under the command of General Sir Ralph Abercromby, escorted by a squadron under Rear-Admiral Sir Richard Bickerton. The Ministers intended that this army should co-operate with the Austrian forces besieging Genoa and should be supported by Keith's fleet. A decisive success in this region would rescue northern Italy from French control, and would open a way to the invasion of Provence along the Riviera coast road.

The Austrians captured Genoa on 5th June, but a week later their army was destroyed at Marengo, and, when Abercromby reached Minorca at the end of the month, it was clear that the favourable moment for intervention in Italy had passed. Cadiz was suggested as the next point of attack, and then somewhere in Portugal ; meanwhile Malta was on the point of capitulating, so that Abercromby was left at Gibraltar without any clearly defined objective.

After considering the question the whole summer the Ministers finally decided that Abercromby should be sent to Egypt, to undo the evil wrought by their own stupidity. Moreover, there were indications that if anything substantial was to be achieved he would have to hurry, since the impending armed neutrality of the northern Powers suggested that it might be necessary to withdraw the British fleet from the Mediterranean for a second time. Buonaparte would then be at liberty to reinforce Menon, and, in any case, Menon's present position would be a useful bargaining factor to the French in any future peace negotiations involving restoration of conquered territory.

So on 24th October, Keith wrote Smith a very polite letter, announcing the coming expedition and asking for Smith's opinion as to (1) a rendezvous for Keith's fleet, (2) a position for his own and the Turkish ships to occupy meanwhile, so as to co-operate most effectively, and (3) a good place for landing Abercromby's army. 'The long experience which you have had, the local information which you have acquired, and the extensive knowledge which you possess of the nature of the country, the coast and the climate, as well as of the character and disposition of the people with whom we are to deal, lead me to rely with the greatest confidence on our profiting by your communications.' For the first time Smith's advice had been anxiously sought for in the most flattering, yet deserving terms, by the commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Fleet.

The expedition left Gibraltar at the end of November, and reached Mamorice Bay, north of Rhodes, at the end of December, where it was joined by Smith. Here they had cause to verify his unfavourable opinion of the Turks as organisers, and, finding no force available to co-operate with them, waited till February 1801, and then sailed for Aboukir Bay, which they reached on 1st March. Bad weather, however, prevented them from landing till the 8th, and, although Menon had thus had ample warning of their approach, he only succeeded in concentrating 2,000 men to oppose them.

The attack was carried out in great style by 6,000 troops under Sir John Moore and a strong force of seamen and marines led by Smith as acting brigadier-general. They landed in flat-bottomed boats, cutters and launches, under the covering fire of gunboats; but, owing to the semicircular shape of the bay, the French were able to do them considerable damage with grape and musketry

during the last half-mile to the beach. Nevertheless, they pulled ashore under heavy fire, formed up and drove the French back two miles, upon which Moore halted to consolidate.

Smith was, of course, delighted at being in the van of the attack, and wrote long reports to Keith on the excellent behaviour of the troops and their keen co-operation with the Navy.

Abercromby now landed the rest of his force, up to a total of 16,000 men, and on 13th March attacked the French position five miles east of Alexandria, covering the approach of the French main body from Cairo. The gunboats had meanwhile penetrated into Lake Maadieh, and covered the British advance, but Abercromby advanced beyond the limits of their support, and, coming under heavy fire, had to retire.

Eventually Menon himself arrived from Cairo to take charge of the situation, and, hearing rumours of an army from India coming up the Red Sea to take him in the rear, decided to attack at once. He had in all about 10,000 men, the remainder being in Upper Egypt, and his plan was to break through the British right flank and cut them off from the sea. The attack began on the morning of 21st March and utterly failed, the gunboats covering the British right flank successfully and the French losing 4,000 men. But the British casualties were also heavy; Abercromby was mortally wounded, Sir John Moore and General Hope were both wounded, and Smith was hit in the shoulder by a musket-ball. He was, however, as cheerful as ever, and continued to write Keith long despatches on the good behaviour of the forces, couched in the language of a pontifical but urbane *generalissimo*, bringing to the notice of his home Government the names of deserving subordinates.

General Sir John Hely Hutchinson now took over the command. He at once fortified his position in front of Alexandria, which he further embarrassed by cutting the dyke which kept the water out of Lake Mareotis. This also enabled the gunboats to get up to his advanced positions with supplies. He then detached part of his force to besiege Rosetta, together with 4,000 Turks who had just landed.

After seeing Lake Mareotis successfully flooded, he went himself to Rosetta, leaving only 6,000 men before Alexandria. Advancing rapidly up the Rosetta mouth of the Nile, he arrived before Cairo on 1st June and joined forces with the Grand Vizier's main Turkish army.

But, meanwhile, he had a violent quarrel with Smith, whom he ordered to return to the fleet. It arose from a difference of opinion as to the management of 'our ill-informed, illiberal, cruel, avaricious, perfidious allies, the Turks.' Smith suggested to Hutchinson that they should be firmly controlled. Hutchinson, whether he failed to control them or not, was unwilling to be advised by Smith, who, however, was personally acquainted with all the Turkish generals. They naturally intrigued together to get him removed, and were successful. Undoubtedly Smith made a mistake in displaying his local knowledge and influence too openly and in treating Hutchinson like a junior colonel. Nevertheless, Hutchinson appears to have acted most unwisely in dismissing him, especially after he had just shown his executive capacity by creating a flotilla at Rosetta for the advance up the Nile, when all the seamen and gunboats were still in Lake Mareotis or with the main fleet.

Hutchinson, however, was a skilful soldier; he persuaded General Belliard's army to surrender at Cairo on

27th June, and to be conveyed to France with all their weapons and stores. He then concentrated his whole force against Menon at Alexandria, who, being heavily attacked, asked for an armistice.

Instead, he was sent proposals for a convention by which he and his army might return to France, leaving behind them their artillery, ammunition and ships. With a very slight difference, the terms were similar to those agreed to at El Arish, and the intervening confusion and delay had cost Britain thousands of lives and thousands of pounds.

By a just irony it was Smith, representing the naval forces, who accompanied Major Montressor in bearing the terms to Menon, and on 22nd September the Convention was signed. Smith and Colonel John Abercromby (son of the general) were sent home with despatches, by Keith and Hutchinson respectively.

VIII

'Captain Selby,' said Smith, as he stepped on board *El Carmen* frigate, bound for home, 'if you will do me the honour to be guided by my advice, we will make a passage that shall astonish the world.'

So they set a course close to the Barbary coast to take advantage of the off-shore winds, but found them unaccommodating, and were nearly wrecked off Cape Dern. Consequently, the only astonishment shown by the world was at the performance of a sloop, which left Egypt with duplicate despatches a fortnight later, and arrived a fortnight before them.

El Carmen reached Portsmouth at last on 9th November, and Smith landed 'attired in Turkish dress, turban, robe, shawl, and girdle round his waist, with a brace of pistols.' He was not the same Smith who left England

as captain of the *Tigre* three years before, but rather a British Pasha accustomed to a wide dominion over Arabs and Mamelukes and contemptuous of departmental strategy. We have our modern examples of similar transformations. In the Levant his costume had been more extraordinary still, in fact almost imperial, comprising 'a large pair of moustachios, a long blue cloak lined with ermine, gold epaulets and a large sabre.' He 'shortened his moustachios daily' during the voyage home, 'according to our run made in the night, fully determined to get rid of them by our arrival in England,' but, though he apparently landed clean-shaved, he could not bring himself to give up his robe and turban.

Finding that his friend, Lord Spencer, had resigned from the Admiralty and that the negotiations with France were about to develop into the so-called Peace of Amiens, Smith turned his attention to civil affairs. Having received in person the Freedom of the City of London, together with a handsome sword, he was persuaded to stand for the borough of Rochester at the approaching general election, and was triumphantly elected. He joined the Big Navy group in the House, and criticised the Government in the debate on the Navy Estimates in 1802 for reducing the number of dockyard workers, while he supported Mr. Alexander's motion for increasing the number of seamen. In this he was probably ill-advised, as it meant that he was attacking the policy of his old chief, St. Vincent, who was now First Lord, and in whose eyes he still appeared as an impertinent charlatan.

This probably accounts for the fact that he received no recognition of his services after the relief of Acre beyond a series of weird and complicated augmentations to his armorial bearings, namely:

'A wreath of laurel accompanied by two crosses

Calvary, and on a chief of honourable augmentation, the interior of an ancient fortification, in perspective ; in the angle a breach ; and in the sides of the said breach the standard of the Ottoman Empire and the Union flag of Great Britain.'

His crest, a leopard's head, was allowed to be ' issuant out of an oriental crown,' while a second crest was granted him consisting of ' the Imperial Ottoman Chelengk or plume of triumph, upon a turban.'

He was also granted supporters, the dexter one being ' a tiger guardant, navally crowned ; in the mouth a palm branch and supporting' [in addition to the shield] ' the Union flag of Great Britain, with the inscription, " Jerusalem 1799 " upon the Cross of St. George ' ; and for the sinister ' a lamb, murally crowned ; in the mouth an olive branch, supporting the banner of Jerusalem.'

Anyone unacquainted with English eighteenth-century heraldry might imagine these augmentations to have been in the nature of a practical joke, but they were quite in keeping with the spirit of the age, and Smith was doubtless delighted with his apocalyptical neo-Gothic honours.

In the spring of 1803 the war began again, and Buonaparte assembled large forces of troops on the north coast of France and in the Netherlands, preparatory to his intended invasion of England. Smith was soon appointed to the *Antelope* (50) as commodore of a small squadron, under Keith, detailed to watch the mouth of the Scheldt and the port of Flushing. As this was the main approach to Antwerp, Buonaparte's principal northern base, the service was an important one, but Smith found it so uninteresting that he asked to be relieved after a year. From May 1804, when he struck his broad pendant, to November 1805, he was employed

on several small services in the Channel and North Sea, chiefly connected with a projected attack on Boulogne. This was to be executed by ships specially designed by Smith, supplied with various combustibles invented by the notorious General Congreve. Being kindred spirits, these two managed to collect over thirty ships for their own special use, and kept them for weeks on end, to the disgust of Keith, whose force was grossly denuded. In the end nothing material was accomplished, chiefly owing to bad weather conditions, and in November 1805 Smith was promoted to the rank of rear-admiral of the Blue and was appointed to the Mediterranean.

Here at last was another grand opportunity for the display of his eccentric talents, for he was to command a detached squadron off the coast of Italy, designed to co-operate with the Austrian and Neapolitan forces in driving the French north and restoring King Ferdinand to the throne of Naples. In any case, he was to prevent the French seizing Sicily and using it as a jumping-off place for a second attempt on Egypt. It was Nelson's plan, and he had specially recommended Smith for its execution, a *rapprochement* having taken place between them since Nelson's Copenhagen exploit.

Smith hoisted his flag in the *Pompée* (84), and reached Palermo in April, together with three other ships of the line, supplied him by Collingwood, now commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean.

On his arrival, Smith found that, as a result of the recent defeats of Ulm and Austerlitz, the allies were in a most desperate position; Gaeta, brilliantly defended by the Prince of Hesse-Philipstadt, being the only town on the east which still held out.

Acting with his usual energy, he at once sailed north and supplied the garrison with a large quantity of

ammunition and stores, together with some naval guns, and, leaving Captain Richardson with the *Juno* and a flotilla of gunboats to assist in harrying the besiegers, he passed on to Naples, where he found Joseph Buonaparte in the act of celebrating his accession to the throne of the Two Sicilies. It would have been easy enough to have bombarded the town, but, with his usual humanity, Smith 'considered that the unfortunate inhabitants had evil enough on them,' and so attacked and captured Capri instead.

He then returned to Sicily, where General Stuart was preparing for a descent on Calabria with about 5,000 British troops. These were landed in St. Euphemia Bay by means of excellent combination between the services, and the French were defeated at Maida; but Smith and Stuart could not agree as to the next move, and meanwhile the French made good their retreat and Gaeta surrendered. Smith was all for arming the local inhabitants and encouraging them in guerilla operations against the French, but General Fox, who had just come out to take supreme command, considered that this would only lead to useless brigandage.

Smith argued, demonstrated and partially succeeded. 'Arms and ammunition were conveyed into the mountains of Calabria; the smaller detachments of the enemy were driven from the shores, and some of the strongest points were armed and occupied by the insurgents and parties of English marines and seamen.' But his relations with the army officers, especially Sir John Moore, became worse and worse, while he continued to scatter 'through the interior his proclamations as "commander-in-chief" on behalf of the King of Naples.' It was naturally good policy to encourage the fickle Calabrians by assuming an important, if slightly irregular,

title; but the soldiers, few of whom had had any experience of expelling the French from territory by means of propaganda, were aghast at such initiative, and a crisis was only averted by Collingwood ordering Smith to join Duckworth in an expedition to the Dardanelles.

The reason for this was that Charles Arbuthnot, our Minister at Constantinople, had urged that a naval force should at once be sent to Constantinople to dissuade the Turks from forming a French alliance and to maintain our communications with the Russians. A close study of the events which followed might have prevented the sacrifice of so many lives in the similar, but more extensive, enterprise conducted in the same region during the Great War. Duckworth entered the Straits on 19th February, 1807, with eight of the line, three frigates, two bomb-vessels and no troops. His instructions were to assist Arbuthnot in persuading the Turks to maintain the British alliance, or else to remain neutral. Proceeding up the Straits against the current, he came under a heavy fire from the Turkish batteries, to which, acting on Arbuthnot's advice, he did not reply, until reaching Nagara Point, where a small Turkish squadron was stationed. This he destroyed, and also spiked the guns in the fort on Point Nagara, Smith playing a prominent part in the action. After two days of unfavourable wind, all was fair for an advance on Constantinople, when Arbuthnot suddenly fell ill, and the whole of his diplomatic duties devolved on Duckworth. Fearful of committing himself to a direct war without proper authority, he dallied in front of Constantinople while the Turks increased their land defences, fitted out ships and made constant attacks on his fleet. Realising that nothing effective could be done without an army, and that further delay might entirely prevent his retreat,

he began to repass the Straits on 2nd March, and got clear after suffering very heavily from the land batteries, which had meanwhile been strengthened in his rear.

Smith offered to go ashore and interview the Sultan personally, but Duckworth would not hear of it, and the whole business only served to increase French influence in Turkey.

Smith reached home in the summer, and went to Bath to recoup, but by November he was again at sea and on his way to Lisbon. Buonaparte was trying to make Portugal declare war on England, and Junot, with a large army, had already invaded the country. The Prince Regent, in a moment of weakness, so far complied with the French wishes as to order the arrest of all British subjects and the seizure of their goods, upon which our Ambassador, Lord Strangford, demanded his passport. At this stage Smith arrived with six ships and instructions to blockade the Tagus and at all costs to prevent the Portuguese fleet falling into the hands of the French.

Encouraged by his appearance, Lord Strangford, who had not yet left Lisbon, asked for an audience with the Prince Regent, and told him that he must either surrender his fleet to the British or else withdraw it from Lisbon and sail to Rio de Janeiro, under British protection. The Regent, despite his recent ambiguous conduct, had no real love for the French, and so on 29th November eight Portuguese ships of the line and some thirty others left the Tagus bearing him and his whole family on board, just as Junot's troops entered the suburbs of Lisbon. Smith detached four of his own ships to escort them across the Atlantic, and continued on the Tagus station till February 1808, when he received

instructions to proceed to Rio de Janeiro and take command of the British ships already on the coast of Brazil.

Smith was soon *persona grata* at Rio, and enjoyed himself immensely as naval and diplomatic adviser to the exiled Portuguese Government. The Portuguese royal family and nobles vied with each other in showing him civilities, and he was given permission to quarter the royal arms of Braganza with his own. The British Cabinet were delighted at having sent out just the right man to flatter and guide their weak-willed allies, but suddenly they found that Smith's far-reaching designs were threatening to include the whole of South America.

It had been represented to him by the Portuguese Ministers that the safety of Brazil, their only large colony, was endangered by the possibility of a French landing in the River Plate. The Spanish colonists at Monte Video and Buenos Aires were at the moment sheep without shepherds, the Spanish Government at Madrid having collapsed before Buonaparte, so that there was no knowing what might happen if they were invited by a French expedition to inaugurate a republic. The failure of Sir Home Popham's mad venture there in the previous year, in the name of King George III, merely showed the warlike qualities of these Spaniards and their unwillingness to accept a British 'alliance.' Consequently, the Portuguese were nervous about the southern frontier of Brazil, and wanted Smith to give them British naval assistance in consolidating their position. Smith, only too eager to co-operate, suggested a grand combination with the Spanish royalists in Chile and Peru under Don Pedro Carlos, nephew of King Charles IV and cousin of the Princess of Portugal. In this he succeeded as far as getting the Spaniards at

Lima (Peru) to declare war against France and to assert that a state of peace existed with Britain. He also despatched Captain Yeo, his most able subordinate, to Peru, to arrange for a joint attack on the French island of Cayenne (Guiana), which was brilliantly captured in May 1809.

All this time Lord Strangford, who had been re-appointed Ambassador to the Portuguese Court at Rio, was doing his utmost to assert himself and get Smith recalled, but, as he did not speak Portuguese with any fluency, which apparently Smith did, his opinions carried little weight with the Prince Regent. Moreover, Smith was apparently acting on secret instructions from the British Cabinet, the terms of which he was not at liberty to communicate to Lord Strangford. Thus the Admiral and the Ambassador were placed in that curious relationship to one another which is more commonly found to have existed between the servants of intriguing autocracies than of Great Britain.

In May 1809 Rear-Admiral de Courcy arrived at Rio in the *Diana*, and Strangford at once invited him, on behalf of the Portuguese Court, to assume command of the British squadron, although he was junior to Smith. 'It is not my design to interfere in any manner with the rules of His Majesty's naval service,' wrote Strangford, but he attempted to do so all the same. He also asked de Courcy to meet him the next day at eleven o'clock, when he would present him to the Prince Regent, who wished de Courcy and his officers to have the opportunity of witnessing from the palace windows a great review of troops. De Courcy, much puzzled, at once laid Strangford's highly improper letter before Smith, who replied by signalling 'for all persons belonging to the fleet to repair on board their respective ships immediately,

and that no boats are to be sent on shore after this signal has been made, without leave of the admiral.' 'Consequently,' he wrote triumphantly, 'you cannot meet him at the appointed time and place without my leave, which you have not obtained.'

So Strangford was checked and de Courcy missed the review, though he was presented to the Prince Regent later in the day. But the British Ministers were already becoming alarmed by Smith's far-reaching designs, and orders for his recall arrived almost immediately.

Before leaving, however, he wrote instructions for de Courcy, in which he reviewed the strategic situation of Brazil, and then went on to animadvert on Strangford's behaviour: 'I feel it incumbent upon me, in my public duty, to warn you officially and distinctly, that I have not found His Majesty's Minister plenipotentiary to act frankly and cordially with me, as the admiral on this station, and that my experience does not warrant my giving you any ground for expectation that he will do so with you, or for placing any confidence in the uniformity of any system on which he may be apparently acting with you, in his occasional vague and rare communications with a British admiral, whom he arrogantly manifests himself to consider as a subordinate officer under his command.'

The nature of the further relations of Strangford and de Courcy have not transpired, for Strangford was also recalled immediately afterwards.

Smith reached England in August 1809, and received the 'most grateful thanks' of the London merchants engaged in the trade with Brazil, who were 'impressed with the lively sense of the essential services rendered by him to the commercial and shipping interests of the United Kingdom.'

IX

On reaching home, Smith 'entered into society and enjoyed all its gaieties and amusements, to which he had for some time been a stranger,' and in October 1810 he married Caroline, daughter of James Hearn of Waterford. She had been previously married to Sir George Berriman Rumbold, the diplomatist, by whom she had two sons and four daughters.

Smith had already been advanced to vice-admiral of the Blue and had no expectations of further employment, but in July 1812 he was appointed second-in-command of the Mediterranean Fleet under Sir Edward Pellew. Their principal duty was the close blockade of Toulon, which gave little hope of action, since no ruses were employed, as in Nelson's time, to lure the enemy out, nor had the French sufficient ships wherewith to oppose them.

On his way to join Pellew, Smith called at Carthagena and spent some time in assisting General Ross with a small British force in putting the town in a good state of defence. Having explained his views on this subject at great length to the Admiralty, he was immediately reprimanded for not corresponding through his commander-in-chief. Pellew, however, does not seem to have borne him any ill-will, and shortly afterwards despatched him on the delicate but congenial task of persuading the Sardinians to maintain their position as neutrals and not to give facilities or protection to French ships, or to interfere with our own. The situation had been recently aggravated owing to a Sardinian fort having opened fire on one of our frigates when she was trying to examine a suspected French vessel. Smith brushed aside the local officials of both Governments

and at once got to grips with the King, Victor Emmanuel, and his principal Minister, the Chevalier Rossi, with both of whom he was soon on the most intimate terms. Sardinia's position as a neutral was settled in a manner highly satisfactory to Great Britain, and, to mark his appreciation of Smith's courteous and statesmanlike conduct, Victor Emmanuel and his family honoured him by accepting an invitation to dine on board the flagship. 'I, of course,' said Smith, 'received them with the honours due to crowned heads, and royal persons connected with the imperial family of Austria by a double marriage.' The whole affair was yet another diplomatic triumph, but having no extra allowance for table money as second-in-command, he was considerably out of pocket through giving such a magnificent entertainment. However, he indented successfully on the Foreign Office.

Except for this brilliant interlude, the rest of his service in the Mediterranean was distinctly dull; the French having neither the will nor the power to force an exit from Toulon. But he killed time by setting up a printing-press on board his ship the *Tremendous*, and by organising ship's theatricals when ashore at Sardinia or Minorca.

No sooner was the war finished than Smith set about executing a project on which he had been pondering ever since his service in the Levant, namely the formation of a great international Christian society for the liberation of slaves held by the Barbary pirates.

Not only was the scheme in tune with the humanitarian efforts of Wilberforce, with whom he frequently corresponded, but it also ministered to the neo-medieval sentiments of the Romantic movement, and to the political idealism of the Holy Alliance.

This was to be no vulgar evangelical catchpenny effort,

emanating from obscure conventicles, but a powerful international organisation numbering crowned heads amongst its members. Moreover, in 1799, while engaged in settling disturbances between the Turks, Greeks and Albanians in Cyprus, he had been invested by the Greek Archbishop of Nicosia with a Templar's Cross, said to have been worn by Richard Cœur de Lion. The Order of Knights Templars was apparently still surviving in Cyprus, in a somewhat modernised form, under the control of the Greek Church, and Smith had been appointed Grand Prior of England by the Archbishop. Thinking, however, that it would suit his present purpose better to form an entirely new society, he entered into correspondence with kings, statesmen, admirals and generals, and so formed the Knights Liberators of the Slaves in Africa, of which society he became president.

Vienna being the place chosen for the peace congress, and thus becoming the scene of a great international gathering, he arranged for a meeting of the Knights to take place there in the winter of 1814. But scarcely were the sovereigns and diplomatists settled down to arranging the terms of peace, and rearranging the map of Europe, when Buonaparte was announced to have escaped from Elba and to be reorganising the armies of France. Smith at once proceeded to Belgium, and by hard riding got up with the troops at Waterloo, borrowing a sword on the way from Sir George Berkeley, who was returning wounded from the battle. 'I stemmed the torrent of the disabled and givers-in the best way I could, was now and then jammed among the broken wagons by a drove of disarmed Napoleonist janissaries, and finally reached the Duke of Wellington's person and rode with him from St. Jean to Waterloo. . . . I had the

heartfelt gratification of being the first Englishman that was not in the battle who shook hands with him before he got off his horse, and of drinking his health at his table, a supper I shall no more forget than I can the dinner at Neuilly, when Fouché came out to arrange the quiet entry in Paris.' Smith had meanwhile ordered several wagons to go round, at his own expense, and collect wounded lying about in stray parts of the battle-field; by this means he saved the lives of over 130 British, French, Prussians, Dutch, Belgians and Hanoverians. Soon after he was much in demand as special commissioner, together with the Comte de Thury and the Baron de Breda, to arrange for Louis XVIII's reception on his return through the towns of Arras and Amiens.

After the allied armies had entered Paris a second time, a banquet was given by Wellington at the Palais Bourbon, at which Smith was invested, on behalf of the King, with the Order of the Bath, a most tardy and insignificant recognition of services which had already been more fittingly recognised by the rulers of Sweden, Turkey, Naples and Portugal.

On this occasion he proposed, as a somewhat unusual toast, 'the health and deliverance of the White Slaves in the Barbary States,' which was, however, extremely well received.

He soon began to work in earnest on their behalf, living chiefly in Paris, and opened an enormous correspondence with the sovereigns of Europe and of Morocco, Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli. In treating with the last named, he showed considerable ingenuity in appealing to the precepts of the Koran and the sayings of Mohammed against the use of slaves both white and black. The movement, however, did not make rapid

progress, especially as the central Ottoman Government at Constantinople refused to co-operate in consequence of the attack on the Dardanelles. We may, therefore, surmise that his impatience was more assuaged by the action of Sir Edward Pellew, his old chief, now Lord Exmouth, in bombarding Algiers, than by all the exertions of humanitarian diplomacy. He wrote Exmouth a magnificent letter of congratulation, beginning 'My dear Brother Knight,' and asking for a wax image of him to be sent to the society's office in Paris.

As he grew older Smith became more and more absorbed in the mystic symbolism of Knighthood, and, although he apparently relinquished the office of Grand Prior of the Knights Templars of England, he became Regent of the whole Order of the Temple as constituted at Paris after 1815, and also Regent of the Order of the Orient. He still showed an unabated interest in Near Eastern affairs and Greek independence.

But now, like so many other public servants of the time, he was considerably in debt, and therefore made a claim on the British Government for a repayment of the expenses incurred by him on their behalf during his various services. These included claims for :

Gratuity for burning ships at Toulon, not awarded because he was on half-pay at the time.

Expenses in connection with his escape from Paris, 1795, acknowledged by the Government as 'a sacred national obligation.'

Expenses incurred in the Levant, not covered by his pension of £1,000 a year.

Share of the prize money for the battle of Aboukir, refused because he only held acting rank ashore under Abercromby.

Expenses amounting to £4,700 in assisting the British forces in Sicily and Calabria, 1806, on which he had been paying interest ever since.

Despite the formidable nature of this bill, he was extremely lucky to receive £4,500 in compensation for his Sicilian expenses, and an additional pension of £1,000, to date from 1814.

'He was now perfectly at his ease in Paris, where, by his lively and agreeable manners, and the suavity of his temper and disposition, added to his universal benevolence, he became a general favourite,' constantly visited by the most distinguished men in France and on intimate terms with the King. He often amused himself by being rowed on the Seine by French ex-seamen, earning their living as boatmen, whom he treated with bread and brandy. In 1821 he was advanced to the full rank of admiral, and in 1830 to Lieutenant-General of Marines, but received no other recognition of his services.

In 1826 his wife died, and from this great blow he appears never to have fully recovered. Moreover, he soon fell into further financial entanglements, and was much distressed at being refused any naval or diplomatic employment by the British Government. He also became somewhat disordered in intellect, and was much worried by the idea that in accepting the Regency of the Templars he might be disqualified from receiving his naval half-pay, on account of his having taken a form of holy orders. His brain clouded still further, and in moments of extreme distress he imagined himself guilty of the same charges which brought the Grand Master and his Knights to the stake at the hands of Philip the Fair. On Queen Victoria's accession, however, his scruples as to his honour and allegiance

were overcome by his receiving the Grand Cross of the Bath.

In 1840 he was seized with apoplexy and paralysis, and died in the arms of his stepson, Captain Arabin, dreaming of the Star of Jerusalem and the deeds of Richard Cœur de Lion.

He was buried beside his wife in Père la Chaise, an admiral and a general of both nations being his pall-bearers.

So ended the career of Sir Sidney Smith, who never had the good fortune to command a fleet in a set battle, but who defeated Buonaparte with a handful of seamen and marines. Many of his contemporaries received peerages and baronetcies for a single day's action ; Graves and Bridport were made peers and Pasley and Bowyer baronets, solely for their conduct on the First of June ; Jervis became an earl as a result of the battle of St. Vincent ; Captain Berry was knighted for bringing home Nelson's despatches after the battle of the Nile ; and Duncan was made a baron for defeating an inferior Dutch fleet off Camperdown. Pensions flowed in abundance. This does not mean that such honours were undeserved or that their recipients had not thoroughly earned them by previous service, but it is remarkable that until 1815, Smith was only ' Sir Sidney ' by courtesy of the King of Sweden.

Possessed of the unusual talent of being able to invest every act of naval service with its maximum diplomatic and political significance, he was constantly thwarted and discouraged by inferior seamen, inferior diplomatists and nervous statesmen. To the last he was a crusader against stupidity and departmentalism, and on behalf of the slaves. Having been a prisoner of war himself he always did his utmost to procure the release of any that

he could, and being, above all, a man who hated bloodshed for its own sake, he could treat the French humanely in Egypt and succour them at Waterloo. Disparaged by the chief historians of his own country, he will always remain the eccentric but 'chivalrous knight of the sword.'

LORD CAMELFORD

LORD CAMELFORD

I

IT was almost inevitable that Thomas Pitt, second Lord Camelford, should have been an extraordinary character. His grandfather, Thomas Pitt, some time Lord Warden of the Stannaries, was the brother of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, and displayed to a high degree the Pitt passion for politics, but untempered by scruple, prudence or common sense. He ruined himself by electioneering extravagance, was forced at one time to fly the country, and died in 1761, leaving his family practically bankrupt.

His son Thomas was a man of parts, who by rigid economy retrieved the family fortunes, and by his dexterous use of the pocket boroughs of Okehampton and Old Sarum, combined with good sense and effective oratory, soon earned the reputation of being an astute politician. He joined the Grenville Ministry in 1763 as a Lord of the Admiralty, and through the influence of his cousin, William Pitt the younger, was raised to the peerage in 1784 as Baron Camelford of Boconnoc in Cornwall.

He was also a patron of the arts, designed Camelford House at the top of Park Lane, interested himself in the manufacture of porcelain, and corresponded with Mrs. Delany and Angelica Kauffmann. By all accounts he was generally admitted to have been ' very well bred, polite and sensible.' What further recommendation

could a gentleman require at the end of the eighteenth century?

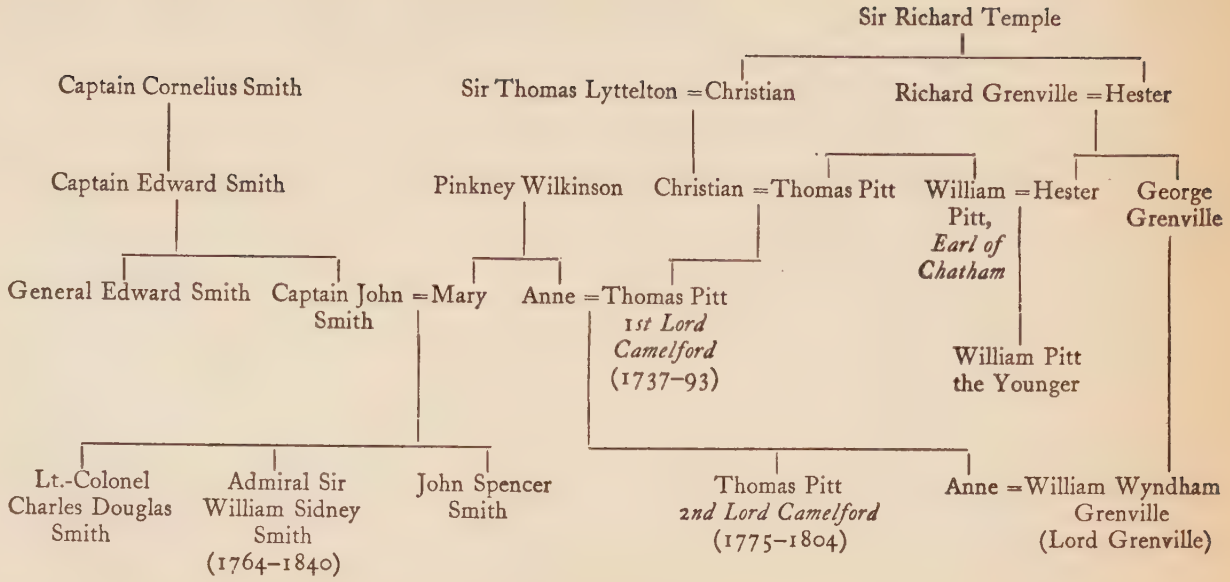
It is clear, however, that, in addition to the usual Pitt susceptibility to gout, he never enjoyed really good health, and while still young was 'troubled with fits,' due to the treatment he received from his father, and was forced to spend the last few years of his life in Italy.

In 1771 he married Anne, younger daughter of Mr. Pinkney Wilkinson, whose elder daughter, Mary, had married the father of Sir Sidney Smith. Wilkinson, who seems to have been a very wealthy and pushing fellow, strongly disapproved of the Smith connection, so that Anne and Camelford inherited most of his money.

They had two children, Thomas Pitt, second Lord Camelford, and Anne, who married her cousin, Lord Grenville, some time Foreign Secretary. From the genealogical tree on page 223 it will be seen how closely their immediate ancestors were connected with the Temples, Grenvilles and Lytteltons, thus producing the most remarkable 'cousinhood' in English history. The odds, therefore, against the second Lord Camelford being just an ordinary man were extremely heavy, and in the end he proved to be the most extraordinary of them all.

Young Thomas Pitt was born in 1775, and was sent to Berne in Switzerland for his early education. Wandering over the foothills of the mountains, he soon became dominated by the grandeur of his surroundings, and, as the last mad act of his life drew to a close, he longed to be again in the 'spot not near the haunts of men' where he used to sit as a child.

From Berne he was sent to Charterhouse, and 'at a proper age,' fourteen, entered the Navy, as a midshipman in the *Guardian*, carrying 'stores, cattle and convicts'


Sir Richard Temple
Captain Cornelius Smith
Sir Thomas Lyttelton =Christian
Richard Grenville =Hester
Captain Edward Smith
Pinkney Wilkinson
Christian =Thomas Pitt
William Pitt, Earl of Chatham
=Hester
George Grenville
General Edward Smith
Captain John Smith
=Mary
Anne =Thomas Pitt 1st Lord Camelford (1737–93)
William Pitt the Younger
Lt.-Colonel Charles Douglas Smith
Admiral Sir William Sidney Smith (1764–1840)
John Spencer Smith
Thomas Pitt 2nd Lord Camelford (1775–1804)
Anne =William Wyndham Grenville (Lord Grenville)

to New South Wales. On Christmas Eve, 1789, they had reached a point about 1,500 miles south-east of Cape Town, when they encountered a large iceberg, from which they endeavoured to fill up with water. Instead, they hit an underwater projection of the berg and were nearly sunk. The commander, Lieutenant Edward Riou (afterwards killed at Copenhagen under Nelson), sent off a large part of the crew in boats, but remained on board himself with a few others, including Pitt. After suffering frightful hardships and being constantly worried by 'the unruly temper of the convicts,' they eventually navigated the ship into Table Bay on 21st February, 1790, fifty-nine days after striking the iceberg. Pitt then came home, and in March 1791 was appointed to the *Discovery*, commanded by Captain George Vancouver, who was sent to establish British sovereignty at Nootka Sound and to survey the Pacific coast of North America.

After his recent experiences, Pitt was evidently considered a suitable junior officer for such an enterprise, but, unfortunately, he also proved himself to be a very turbulent one. The *Discovery* left Falmouth in April, and, having rounded the Cape of Good Hope, carried out a very important survey of the south-west coast of Australia, in the course of which King George's Sound, Mount Gardner and Cape Hood were discovered for the first time and named. Vancouver next steered for New Zealand and explored Dusky Bay, and then turned north to Tahiti, which he reached in December, having so far, more or less, followed the tracks of Captain Cook. Having carried out his official duties at Nootka, he made a complete coastal survey of the island which bears his name, and then examined the coast of the mainland as far south as San Francisco.

Vancouver was a fine seaman and a great explorer, and, like other men of his type, doubtless a stiff disciplinarian, especially under conditions where the personality of the captain mattered more than the precise formulae of the King's Regulations. But Pitt bore his lot hardly, and, having been flogged three times for truculence and having also been given a spell in the bilboes, was finally marooned by Vancouver at Hawaii on 7th February, 1794. His treatment was certainly harsh both as regards his final discharge and his previous bodily punishments, but it is clear that he must have given great provocation, which was stupid in any case, and ten times more so when commanded by a tough captain in the middle of the Pacific, who thought as little of leaving the son of a peer on an obscure island as of kicking him ashore at Portsmouth.

After ten months' extreme hardship, Pitt worked his way to Malacca, where he signed on as an able seaman aboard the *Resistance*. His energy and obvious good-bearing at once attracted the attention of Captain Pakenham, who, being short of officers, appointed him acting-lieutenant after only three weeks. But on 24th November, 1795, he was dismissed from the ship.

This was extremely unfortunate, as it was clear that he was a man of considerable ability and a first-rate seaman, having had exceptional experience, considering his age. Even thus far he was by no means the counterpart of his cousin Smith. For, whereas Smith excited the irritation of his immediate superiors by his extraordinary independent action, he never failed to gain the compensating admiration of some important personage by the breadth of view and diplomatic ability which he invariably displayed. Pitt, on the other hand, was far too violent, and

had not sense enough to lie low until well-earned promotion had given him a position in which he could exercise his admitted ability with some success.

After being summarily dealt with a second time, Pitt's next movements are rather obscure, but he managed to reach England early in 1796, after being shipwrecked on the coast of Ceylon in the previous December. On his return he found that, as a result of the death of his father, Lord Camelford, in 1793, he had succeeded to the title.

Assisted by his new prestige, he was actually able to get appointed as midshipman again, without any further enquiry into his recent conduct, and in 1796 he served in the *Tisiphone* in the North Sea, and afterwards in the *London* in the Channel Fleet.

He now began to take life more seriously, paid great attention to service matters, and in April 1797 passed his examination for lieutenant, and was promoted, being twenty-two years of age. A few days afterwards we find him writing an important and well-phrased personal letter to Lord Spencer, warning him that the mutineers at Spithead contemplated detaining the representatives of the Board of Admiralty at Portsmouth, should they venture on board any of the ships. But just when it seemed that his previous conduct might become glossed over, and that he might achieve considerable professional distinction, he suddenly challenged Captain Vancouver to a duel, on the grounds of his ill-treatment in the Pacific. Vancouver was no coward, but he thought it unnecessary to give Camelford satisfaction, unless some flag-officer, acting as arbitrator, should rule that it was owed. Camelford refused to put his case and attacked Vancouver in Bond Street, who, however, was skilfully defended by his brother in a set-to with canes.

In August, Camelford sailed for the West Indies in the *Vengeance* (Captain Thomas Russell). While at St. Kitts, he was appointed by Russell, who happened to be senior officer on the station, to be 'acting commander' of the *Favourite* sloop, whose captain had been invalided. A few days afterwards his appointment was confirmed from Martinique as 'lieutenant commanding' by Rear-Admiral Harvey, the commander-in-chief.

Now, Lieutenant Peterson, the first lieutenant of the *Favourite*, was two years senior to Camelford, and was naturally extremely indignant at being superseded in such cavalier manner, and got himself transferred to the *Perdrix*, a frigate commanded by Captain William Charles Fahie. In January 1798 the two ships, *Perdrix* and *Favourite*, were in English Harbour, Antigua, refitting, and were lying together alongside the dockyard. Captain Fahie was ashore at St. Kitts.

On 13th January hostile ships were observed off the island, and Camelford immediately sent a message to the *Perdrix* to prepare for action and arranged for co-operation with the garrison in case of an attack. At 7 p.m. that night he sent a written order to Peterson directing him to row round the harbour in a guard boat during the night as a precaution against surprise and describing himself as 'commanding His Majesty's sloop *Favourite* and senior officer.'

So far no one had questioned his authority, and he had been treated as senior officer by Captain Mainwaring who had left Antigua the day before. Peterson, however, sent back a message refusing to obey the order, on which Camelford at once sent Crawford, the master of the *Favourite*, to put Peterson under arrest. Crawford soon returned, having made no attempt to do his duty, and shortly afterwards Peterson, being 'as sober as ever he

was,' sent back a counter-order for Camelford to row guard in the harbour that night and describing himself as 'commander of His Majesty's ship *Perdrix* and senior officer.'

Camelford now saw that the situation was serious, and at 9 p.m. he sent Lieut. Milward with a sergeant, a corporal and four marines to Peterson's lodgings. They found the house guarded by a strong party of seamen from the *Perdrix* with muskets and fixed bayonets. Milward went in to interview Peterson and found Crawford with him. A violent altercation followed, in which Crawford sided with Peterson, and swords were drawn, when suddenly Camelford arrived outside the house, and hearing what was going on, shouted to his party to withdraw from the house. Forty of Peterson's men had now assembled, and on Camelford demanding to know where he was, he came out of the house with drawn sword, and in a loud and truculent voice ordered them to load with ball cartridge.

Camelford was now in a very awkward position, for Peterson had gone beyond disobedience, and was actually encouraging a mutiny. He seems to have been a difficult customer. 'Exclusive of his constant neglect of duty,' remarked Camelford, 'the general tenour of his conduct was so illiberal that I have often been heard to express myself vexed that he could not be treated as a gentleman.'

Camelford was unarmed, and wished to avoid bloodshed, but being in such a difficult position he acted vigorously. 'Lieutenant Peterson, do you still persist in refusing to obey my orders?' he asked. 'Yes, I do refuse,' replied Peterson, on which Camelford went and borrowed a pistol from Milward. Coming back, he repeated his question twice, and, on Peterson still refusing, shot him dead.

Luckily Peterson's men did not retaliate, and Camelford having seen Peterson's corpse safely deposited in the capstan house, went back to his ship.

Commander Matson entering the harbour shortly afterwards in the *Beaver* sloop, Camelford demanded a court-martial. The inquest on Peterson was held at the town of St. John's, Antigua, where feeling against Camelford ran very high, Peterson being a native of Nevis, the adjoining island. Nevertheless, the coroner gave as his verdict that Peterson 'lost his life in a mutiny.'

Still, Camelford was not yet free, as he was still subject to a naval court-martial, which was held on board the *Invincible*, lying in Fort Royal Bay, Martinique. Captain William Cayley of the *Invincible* was president of the court, which included among its members, Captain, afterwards Admiral, Sir Charles Ekins.

After considering the case for five days, the court announced that, 'being fully sensible of the necessity of prompt measures, in case of mutiny and disobedience to orders, are unanimously of opinion that the very extraordinary and manifest disobedience of Lieutenant Peterson to the lawful commands of Lord Camelford, the senior officer at English Harbour at that time, and the violent measures taken by Lieutenant Peterson to resist the same by arming the *Perdrix's* ship's company, were acts of mutiny highly injurious to His Majesty's service, the Court do therefore unanimously adjudge that the said Lord Camelford be honourably acquitted.'

No attempts seem to have been made to determine which of the two was really senior officer at Antigua, Camelford's confident assertion being accepted without question. Actually he had been gazetted full commander

on 12th December, but no one in the West Indies knew this at the time. But the court were evidently so impressed by what had recently happened at Spithead and the Nore, with repetitions in miniature on nearly every British naval station, that they at once accepted Camelford's plea of insubordination, followed by mutiny, and gave his action their unqualified approval.

Camelford reached home in the summer with the reputation of being a very severe officer, but one who was always kind to the sick, whom he constantly provided with delicacies from his private supply. Scorning the extravagant and expensive fashions of the day, he wore a plain lieutenant's coat without shoulder knots, and with the buttons green with verdigris, and on his head 'a monstrous large laced cocked hat.' In face he was said to have closely resembled the unfortunate and notorious Lord George Gordon.

His next appointment was to the *Charon*, which was to carry guns to the Mediterranean to be used for arming the gunboats then being fitted out at Constantinople under the direction of his cousin, Sir Sidney Smith. Camelford, however, grew tired of waiting for his ship to be ready for sea, and decided to undertake a piece of unofficial secret service and obtain some French charts from the Ministry of Marine in Paris. To do this he got a letter of introduction to Barras, a member of the Directory, written by Monsieur Bompard, a French prisoner of war at Dover, in which he was described as 'a man willing to render important service to France.' The next business being to get to France, he hired the services of some local boatmen, who, however, were somewhat suspicious of a closely cropped man wearing an all round hat, blue coat, white fustian breeches, and boots splashed all over with mud, who confidently assured them that Turnbull, who

robbed the Mint, was a fool who did not know his way to France. They asked him his name and he told them, but, being simple souls and cautious, even patriotic perhaps, and certainly in hopes of a reward, they handed him over to the Collector of Customs. He was then searched and the letter to Barras discovered. This was a serious affair, and he was sent to London under arrest and interrogated by the Duke of Portland, the Home Secretary, and afterwards by a special committee of the Privy Council. After an exhaustive enquiry he was acquitted of any suspicion of treachery, but the Admiralty disapproved of his conduct to such an extent that they superseded him from the *Charon*. Camelford, in a fury, asked them to remove his name from the Navy List, which they did.

This was a most untoward affair, as it entirely ruined his naval career and left him, at the age of twenty-four, a man of unbounded energy, entirely without occupation or control, and filled with a bitter grievance. He now set up house in Bond Street and quickly established himself as the terror of the Town.

II

Camelford's metropolitan activities were remarkable, not merely for their violence, but also for their scope and diversity. He read widely in mathematics and theology, plunged whole-heartedly into the practical study of chemistry, was extremely free with his money and patronised the most efficient boxing academies. But, despite these praiseworthy pursuits, he was incorrigibly addicted to brawls, and was always appearing as the central figure in petty disturbances.

One night he and a naval friend, Captain Berrie,

strolling in Cavendish Square, suddenly conceived the brilliant notion of chastising 'the guardians of the night.' Two were easily overwhelmed, but two others managed to spring their rattles and 'soon collected a posse of the fraternity,' who arrested Camelford and Berrie and took them to Marlborough Street. Camelford treated the whole affair as an excellent evening's amusement, and presented a guinea all round to the watchmen concerned, with whom he was soon a favourite. In fact, it is said that, after one of his frequent arrests, he persuaded them to let him dress up as one of themselves and give orders to the other prisoners.

Not content with good-humoured skirmishes with the primitive police, he frequently assaulted persons of fashion and quality, being careful in nearly every case to choose overdressed beaux as his victims, being still very simple in his own dress. On one occasion a fine gentleman is said to have annoyed him by calling for candles in a coffee house and appropriating Camelford's till the waiter fetched some more. 'Waitah,' said Camelford, mimicking the beau, 'bring me some snuffahs,' and when they came he extinguished the beau's candles, who, learning from the waiter that Camelford was his persecutor, paid for his wine and fled without touching it. Gentlemanlike pleasantries with night watchmen and door-knockers were, of course, established forms of amusement for those who disliked plays and gambling, or were bored with the fêtes and routs at Vauxhall and the Rotunda. But Camelford seems to have introduced an element of violence into his activities which was consistent neither with place nor person.

One evening he knocked a Mr. Humphries all the way downstairs at Drury Lane theatre, for some

quite inadequate reason, and was forced to pay £500 damages.

On the night of 7th October, 1801, when celebrations and illuminations were being made for the Peace of Amiens, Camelford, entirely distrusting the peace, on patriotic grounds, ordered his house to be left in darkness. Soon a mob collected, and, after some derisive booings and exhortations to show a glimmer, began to batter at the door. Camelford suddenly darted out of the house, armed with a bludgeon, and began to lay about amongst the mob till the whole of Bond Street was in an uproar. Eventually he retired, somewhat battered, while all his lower windows were broken. Next night he filled the house with armed sailors, but no need for their co-operation arose. He afterwards tried to get compensation for the damage from the County of Middlesex.

It is believed that about this time he went abroad, but in 1804 he figured in another theatre incident which was witnessed by the humorous brothers, James and Horace Smith. They called next day at Bond Street and offered to give evidence that it was he who had been assaulted. Camelford was delighted, and treated them with great politeness. They observed that 'Over the fireplace in the drawing-room, were ornaments strongly expressive of the pugnacity of the peer. A long thick bludgeon lay horizontally supported by two brass hooks. Above this was placed parallel one of lesser dimensions, until a pyramid of weapons gradually arose, tapering to a horsewhip.'

Hitherto Camelford does not seem to have shown any marked predilection for feminine society, but about this time he was foolish enough to give ear to the story of a certain Mrs. Simmons, who declared

that a friend of his, Mr. Best, with whom she had recently lived, had spoken of him in a most disparaging fashion.

On 6th March, 1804, Camelford met Best in the Prince of Wales's Coffee House, and, walking up to him, said: 'I find, sir, that you have spoken of me in the most unwarrantable terms.'

Best was at a loss to know what it was all about, and tried to explain that he had never in his life spoken of Camelford in the manner complained of. But Camelford, who was beside himself with rage and refused to listen to any explanations, continued to address him as 'a scoundrel, a liar, and a ruffian.' Whereupon Best, with great misgivings, gave him a formal challenge.

The parties then withdrew with their respective friends to settle the details of the encounter, which was to take place next morning.

Best, who was noted for being one of the best shots with a pistol in England, was extremely loath to fight, and sent Camelford an entirely satisfactory denial of Mrs. Simmons's story the same night. But Camelford, who must have realised by now that he had been misinformed, felt that he could not in honour withdraw from facing such a famous marksman, when he alone had provoked the challenge. Meanwhile several honest citizens, who had seen the quarrel at the coffee-house, went to Bow Street to get bloodshed prevented, and the officers surrounded Camelford's house in Bond Street, and Best's house in Wimpole Street, but neither of them came home.

The whole night seems to have been taken up with arranging preliminaries, and next morning they met at a coffee-house in Oxford Street, where Best personally assured Camelford that he was mistaken in his suspicions,

saying, 'Upon my honour, you have been imposed upon by a strumpet.' 'Best,' said Camelford, 'this is child's play; the thing must go on.'

To his friends he admitted that he had made a frightful mistake, but held that he could not refuse to face the best shot in England, and that Best as a man of honour could not retreat either, and must not have the onus of refusing to do so thrust upon him.

At about eight in the morning the principals and their seconds rode out to Kensington, followed by their servants and a chaise. They stopped at the 'Horse and Groom' and put up the horses, and then walked into the fields at the back of Holland House, where Melbury Road runs to-day. The seconds stepped out a distance of thirty paces, which, when measured afterwards, proved to have been exactly twenty-nine yards, a goodish distance for a pistol duel in those days.

Camelford and Best then took up their positions, and at the signal to begin Camelford fired at once and missed, probably on purpose. There was a pause of a few seconds, and then Best fired, striking Camelford in the right shoulder, who fell at once. Several of Lord Holland's gardeners came running up, startled by the noise, and Best and his seconds made off, Camelford begging that they should not be pursued. At first he declared that he wanted no assistance, but was soon persuaded to let himself be carried to Little Holland House, the residence of Mr. Ottey, while a horseman was sent for Doctor Holmes of Sackville Street.

The wound was found to be mortal, but he lingered till 10th March, attended by his brother-in-law, Lord Grenville, and the Reverend William Cockburne, who wrote an 'authentic account' of his death. He

repeatedly asked that no action should be taken against Best, and after his death a paper was found, written the night before the duel, in which he acknowledged himself as the aggressor, and requested that, if by any chance the law should be put into force against Best, special representations were to be made to the King.

Before his death he wrote a letter to Sir Sidney Smith drawing attention to a codicil in his will, in which he stated that whereas most people had a strong attachment to the country in which they were born, and generally wished that their remains might be conveyed any distance to their native place, his own desire was quite the reverse. He wished Smith to arrange for his body to be removed 'as soon as convenient to a far distant country, to a spot not near the haunts of men, where the surrounding scenery may smile upon my remains.' The spot chosen was where three trees grew overlooking the lake of St. Pierre, in the canton of Berne. He desired that his body should be buried under the centre tree, which should then be replanted, and the owner of the ground compensated by the payment of a thousand pounds. 'At the foot of this tree,' he wrote, 'I formerly passed many solitary hours, contemplating the mutability of human affairs.' 'Let no monument or stone be placed over my grave,' he concluded, together with a request that no mourning should be worn for him. It was this request which drew such a scornful letter from Nelson, when, in desiring that his remains might rest at Burnham Thorpe, unless, as he modestly put it, his country should direct otherwise, he declared that in this respect his views were totally opposed to those of Lord Camelford.

An inquest was held on Camelford after his death, at which the bullet was found to have lodged in his

spine after penetrating the right lung. The gardeners gave evidence as to seeing him lying wounded and some other men hurrying away, and the jury brought in a verdict of 'wilful murder against a person or persons unknown.'

In his will he left a substantial sum to Captain Berrie, to pay his debts, a legacy to his assistant in his chemical experiments, as well as several other charitable bequests, the bulk of his property going to his sister, Lady Grenville.

The war with France having been resumed in 1803, and there being no likelihood of it stopping soon, it was decided that his body should be kept in England until it could be conveyed abroad with safety. A great funeral was held on 17th March at St. Anne's, Soho, the hearse being attended by ten outriders with white scarves and bands, and the horses having plumes of white feathers. The body was carefully embalmed, and after the funeral the coffin was packed in a long basket, described as something like a fish-basket, and placed in the crypt of St. Anne's.

Charles Reade, writing in 1884, stated that he had been informed that the coffin was still there, and it has been confidently asserted by the Rev. J. H. Cardwell, late Rector of St. Anne's, writing in 1910, that it 'is still somewhere in the North Vault, no one knows exactly where.' Nor does it appear that any faculty was ever granted for the removal of the body. There seems to have been a general unwillingness on the part of his family to pursue the matter further.

An account of Camelford's service at sea, which occupied more than a third of his short life of twenty-nine years, and in which he never saw a shot fired against an enemy, would have easily become a classic of adventure, if

he had ever written it. He had the making of a good officer and was obviously a man of all-round ability, and, as Cockburne aptly remarked: 'That warmth of disposition which prompted him so unhappily to such great improprieties, prompted him also to the most lively efforts of active benevolence. From the many prisons in this metropolis, from the various receptacles of human misery, he received unnumbered petitions; and no petition ever came in vain. Constantly would he make use of that influence which rank and fortune gave him with the Government to interfere on behalf of those malefactors whose crimes had subjected them to punishment, but in whose cases appeared circumstances of alleviation.'

It is tempting to imagine what might have happened had the Pitt genius, reinforced by all the solid qualities of the Wilkinsons, Lytteltons and Temples, been expressed in terms of a naval Chatham; a master soul combining all the excellences of Nelson, Sidney Smith and St. Vincent. The great victories over the enemies' fleets would already have been won, but such a paragon as has been suggested would have had no difficulty in handling the Continental system and the French privateers, and in directing the war with America. He might even have prevented the escape of Buonaparte from Elba, and have altered the main current of events in the nineteenth century.

But Camelford was not Chatham, nor was he a surprising mediocrity like Chatham's eldest son, the second earl. His attempts to assert himself as a personage were untempered by any sense of what was practical, let alone of what was proper, and, becoming engulfed in the strange code of contemporary chivalry, he swiftly turned into a Don Quixote without a Dulcinea.

So perished the strangest and wildest of the Pitts, longing for the grand seclusion of the lakes and mountains, which had inspired to a different purpose the author of the *Decline and Fall.*

SIR CHARLES NAPIER

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I

UNLIKE Rodney, Howe and Sidney Smith, who, despite many rebuffs, had plenty of opportunities for service under their own flag, Charles Napier was still under thirty when the great series of French wars came to an end. Consequently, he was forced to create a naval reputation for himself by becoming a sailor of fortune. He was then able to obtain high command in the only important British operations previous to the introduction of ironclads.

His hereditary claims to some considerable intellectual and executive ability were such that it seemed almost impossible that he should ever grow up to lead a humdrum life. He was descended from a long line of Scottish sailors, soldiers, court officials and men of letters, beginning with Sir Alexander Napier, Comptroller of Scotland and Vice-Admiral, who died about 1473. They were all men of exceptional capacity, and included John Napier, the inventor of logarithms. Charles Napier's father was Captain Charles Napier, R.N., son of Francis Scott Napier, the fifth Lord Napier of Merchistoun, Stirling. A characteristic of the family was that many of them married several times, so that young Charles Napier was surrounded by a multitude of relations, nearly all engaged in naval or military service. One of his brothers became a general and the other an official in the East India Company's service. His great-uncle was a general ; one of his uncles was Adjutant-General of Scotland, and another

was a famous artillery expert. Among his cousins were General Charles James Napier, the Conqueror of Sind; General Sir George Thomas Napier, Governor of the Cape of Good Hope; General William Francis Patrick Napier, the historian of the Peninsula War; Captain Henry Edward Napier, R.N., another historian; Francis seventh Lord Napier, soldier and historian; William John eighth Lord Napier, sailor and agricultural reformer; and Mark Napier, the well-known historian and biographer.

Charles was born in 1786, and at the age of seven was sent to the High School at Edinburgh, where he became a leader in fights against bands of town boys. By the age of thirteen he was determined to go to sea, and, having overruled his father's objections, was posted to the *Martin* sloop in November 1799 as 'boy, first-class.' He took part in the operations on the coast of Brittany, and then went to the Mediterranean, where he remained till the Peace of Amiens. In 1803 he was again in the Mediterranean, and then went to St. Helena with a convoy. He was now a full midshipman, and while engaged in the Channel in 1805 distinguished himself in an attack on the Boulogne flotilla. At the end of the year he was promoted to lieutenant, and went to the West Indies in the *Courageux*.

In 1807 he was promoted to commander and given a brig, and next year fought a desperate action with a French corvette, in which his right thigh was broken, but he refused to leave the deck till his ship lost her mainmast and the Frenchman bore away. His next important service was at the capture of Martinique in 1809, where he displayed his exceptional aptitude for combined operations and small-boat warfare. For this he was promoted by Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane to the rank of acting

SIR CHARLES NAPIER

From the picture by Thomas Musgrave Joy in the Painted Hall, Greenwich.
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captain, and while still in his brig hampered the flight of three French '74s' until the rest of the squadron came up. Cochrane gave him command of a prize, but he was sent home shortly afterwards in the *Jason* frigate, and to his immense indignation superseded and put on half-pay, although he was confirmed in his rank as post-captain, being only twenty-three.

His father had meanwhile died, so, after returning to Merchistoun, he took a short course in modern languages, history, chemistry, mathematics and natural philosophy at Edinburgh University, and amused himself by eccentric feats of riding, driving and dancing. His cousins the Hopes filled the highest positions in the British Navy and Army and in the legal department of Scotland, and he was collaterally related to nearly every great public official in Scotland. Ever since the accession of George III and the elevation of Lord Bute, Scotsmen had been entering English public life in increasing numbers, and from 1812 to 1833 they monopolised the control of the Admiralty.

Napier, however, possessed an 'independent spirit,' was politically incautious and 'progressive,' and liked 'to take a line of his own,' so that he neither solicited nor received any advancement from his powerful relatives. After a year at home he became bored with inaction, and decided to pay a visit to his cousins, then serving in Wellington's army in the Peninsula.

He landed at Oporto, with a Scots lawyer as companion, and, taking mules and a guide, they wandered up the Douro valley till they found the British army, near Lamego, after narrowly escaping capture by some French cavalry. Here he found his cousins, Charles James, George Thomas and William Francis Patrick. In accompanying them in some skirmishes he was shot in the leg,

the day before the battle of Busaco, at which, however, he carried Charles James out of action when seriously wounded. Provisions for the army were pretty scarce and spectators not over welcome ; but Napier, as a naval post-captain, was very politely treated by Wellington and the general officers. He followed the army back to the lines of Torres Vedras, and then went to Cadiz, where he spent some time with his brother Thomas, studying French and Spanish till the end of 1810, and is credited with having applied to the Admiralty in the following terms :

> My leave of absence is just out. I don't think it worth remaining here, for I expect you will give me a ship, as I am almost tired of campaigning, which is a d——d rum concern.

II

He reached home at the end of 1810, and next spring was given the *Thames*, a thirty-two-gun frigate, and sent to the Mediterranean. He is described at this time as 'a black ugly-looking fellow, with one leg shorter than the other, and the toe turned out like a dancing-master. He had been wounded in the West Indies, and halted considerably, but nevertheless seemed tolerably active on his pins ; his clothes were good enough, but appeared as if they had been hove on with a pitch-fork ; and, to crown the whole, he wore a three-cornered cocked hat right athwartships. . . . We found the captain was a precious taut hand, and not very particular in rubbing up everybody, whether lieutenant, mid, or man, who neglected his duty, or who, he fancied, did so, which was pretty nearly the same thing.'[1]

[1] Elers Napier : *Life and Correspondence of Sir Charles Napier.*

The French having had no main fleet in existence since Trafalgar, Napier was ordered to co-operate with other British ships on the coast of Naples and Sicily in stopping the coasting trade, attacking enemy forts and batteries on shore, and intercepting their supplies. Having been in the Peninsular campaign, he was always looking for an opportunity to conduct operations on shore, and soon became a master of this type of warfare. But as, like Sidney Smith, he always insisted on assuming as much control on shore as possible, even in the presence of experienced regular soldiers, he came to be looked upon as an interfering fellow.

He began at once by capturing eleven gunboats and a convoy in the gulf of Policastro under cover of a landing by his marines, and was not in the least perturbed by falling overboard while cursing the slowness of one of his midshipmen.

Many more enemy merchantmen were captured; Naples was reconnoitred at close range and the enemy's warships challenged to come out, and the *Thames* co-operated in a combined operation at Palinuro. But Napier was now under the orders of a senior and cautious officer, Captain Duncan, with a larger frigate, and could not therefore display so much initiative.

He captured Sabri, however, unaided, and was then ordered to attack Ponza, a well-garrisoned island opposite Gaeta. Taking another frigate under his command and a battalion of English foot from Sicily, he conducted the whole operation in the most brilliant manner.

He was soon given a better frigate, the *Euryalus*, and sent to intercept trade off the Riviera coast. He assisted in capturing upwards of twenty merchantmen in Cavaliere Bay and destroying the shore batteries defending them,

and also in driving two French frigates ashore at Calvi. While cruising off Marseilles shortly afterwards, they were surprised to observe ' brilliant illuminations ' ashore, ' and concluded that Napoleon had gained a great victory, or that the allies had entered Paris and made peace, either of which events would have caused rejoicing.' White flags and clamorous invitations to come ashore settled their doubts, and the crew of the *Euryalus* spent a gay time ashore entertained by the populace, despite the ' vociferations ' of the sanitary authorities, who declared that they were in quarantine, and that nobody but Napoleon had ever broken the rules.

' From this dream of pleasure,' they were suddenly awakened by orders to get ready to sail for North America. The war of 1812 had imposed a tremendous strain on the British Admiralty, who had to find ships for service in nearly every port of the world, so that the smart American frigates had up till now only been opposed by our worst constructions. But the moment the war against Buonaparte ended, a strong force of ships and troops were hastily got together for a series of combined operations on the American coast.

The *Euryalus* was detailed for an expedition up the Potomac, with Napier as second-in-command, and they captured Alexandria with little opposition, while the main force, moving by land, went higher up the river and burnt Washington. Napier was slightly wounded in the neck, but full of fire and zeal, and, after making a successful demonstration off Baltimore, challenged the U.S. frigate *Constellation* to a single-ship duel, which did not mature, however, owing to the peace.

The *Euryalus* was ordered home in the spring of 1815, and Napier had great hopes of co-operating by sea in the Waterloo campaign. The ship was paid off, a fresh

crew of picked men signed on, and horses purchased for the formation of a naval squadron of cavalry. At the last moment, however, Wellington objected to the scheme, and when personally approached by Napier, presumably on the strength of their acquaintance in the Peninsula, replied that 'the Government and the Admiralty are the best judges whether any part of the Navy should be employed with this army.'

Nevertheless, Napier was awarded the Companionship of the Bath for his recent services, and went on half-pay.

Shortly afterwards he married Frances Elizabeth, daughter of Lieutenant Younghusband, R.N., 'an old and meritorious naval officer,' and widow of Lieutenant Elers, R.N., by whom she already had four children. Napier and his bride 'at first occupied a pleasant country residence called "Little Green," situated at Alverstoke in South Hants, and whilst the novelty lasted he was perfectly content; but, alas! that novelty soon wore away, and he became anxious for more stirring scenes.'[1]

No sooner had Buonaparte surrendered for a second time and the allies again entered Paris than Napier and several hundred other Englishmen all simultaneously came to the independent conclusion that they simply must cross the Channel and view the city from which fire and slaughter had breathed over Europe for more than twenty years. Paris, the home of civic violence and nationalistic imperialism, was again the centre of cosmopolitan politeness. Napier chartered a curricle, 'a two-wheeled open chaise,' and drove with his wife to Dover, from whence they crossed to Calais in a packet boat, still seated in the curricle.

'On reaching Calais they experienced some difficulty in landing, being unprovided with a passport,' but in

[1] Elers Napier: *Life and Correspondence of Sir Charles Napier*.

three days were driving towards Paris. They passed through extraordinary scenes of confusion on the way, masses of allied troops being on the march through northern France, and the inhabitants fleeing from them in every direction and blocking the roads.

Paris was crammed with troops of all nations bivouacked along the boulevards, and they were 'exposed to one of a traveller's greatest annoyances—that of wandering about in a large and unknown town in quest of lodgings, with tired horses and feeling all the discomforts of hunger and fatigue.' They were eventually accommodated *au quatrième*, but soon left, and, proceeding to Versailles, still in the curricle, discovered a château at Viroflay and 'decided upon engaging it for several months.' Napier hurried home to bring over his step-children, while Major Younghusband, his brother-in-law, then quartered in Paris, took charge of the château. Everything of value had been looted from it, and most of the fittings smashed by Prussian and Russian troops, and bands of stray Cossacks were in the habit of calling and demanding food and drink. The Napiers might easily have settled down to enjoy a quiet life 'amidst the shady woods,' but Charles 'soon became weary of the peaceful monotony of such a life,' nor had he any wish to join the gay society of the occupied territory.

Viroflay in winter time seemed a black prospect, and in another few weeks they were off again for Italy, Charles and Elizabeth leading in the curricle,[1] and the children with their nurse, Mary Branksome, following by diligence with the luggage. At Geneva they transferred nurse and

[1] The 'three-decker,' designed by Napier himself, was 'handsome and roomy,' 'the lining was of blue cloth, the body painted sky-blue; red wheels, and drawn by four horses.'—Williams: *Life and Letters of Sir Charles Napier*.

children into a four-wheeled carriage drawn by ' a strong serviceable horse ' and headed for the Simplon Pass. The curricle got through easily, but the carriage had to wait for ' *chevaux de renfort*,' and Mary Branksome, in trying to walk on and explain matters to her master and mistress, was caught in a snowstorm and nearly died.

They eventually arrived at Naples, where a son was born ; but by the summer of 1816 they were off again, this time in a four-in-hand travelling carriage driven by Napier himself. They stopped ' wherever a pretty place presented itself,' took out the horses, saddled them and rode about at leisure. In the winter they reached Rome, where they examined all the sights minutely, Napier denouncing ' in no measured terms ' the apparent predilection of the Italians to cruelty, as witnessed by their ' representations of crucifixions and martyrdoms.' ' He was in this, as in other things, fond of judging for himself.'

They were soon off again, to Florence, Leghorn, and Pisa, where Napier knocked out a rascally *facchino* who attempted to obtain money from him by threats. This nearly proved a fatal affair, for, in crossing the bridge over the Arno on his way to lay information at the Tribunal of Justice, he and the eldest boy Edward were chased by a mob excited by his recent display of force. Napier just reached the Tribunal in time, and, seizing the sentry's musket, drove off the mob, and so enabled them to get shelter inside. He won his case in the subsequent prosecution for assaulting the *facchino*, and then made him ' a handsome present.'

From Pisa they turned east along the foot of the Alps, and reached Venice, where Napier made a careful survey of the anchorages, shore defences and the Arsenal, thinking it might prove useful later. They next visited Como and Garda, and then went to Vienna, and eventually back

to Switzerland via Bohemia and Bavaria. For a moment they seemed about to settle at Vevey; Napier took lessons from a Polish artist and went on with his papers on *The Navy, its Past and Present State*, which he began while awaiting trial at Pisa; and Edward was sent to a school in the neighbourhood.

But the halt appears to have been only to enable Mrs. Napier to give birth to a daughter, and Charles, who 'soon became satiated with the quiet inactivity of the life at Vevey,' gave orders for a move to Paris in the winter of 1818. They took a house in the Rue Pigalle, and Napier 'having succeeded to a handsome fortune,' they lived in an expensive style, 'Mrs. Napier's salons being thrown open on certain days to all her friends.'

But, being soon as tired of fashionable town life as he had been with the peaceful contemplation of the forests of Versailles, the Bay of Naples and the Swiss lakes, he plunged into a scheme for introducing flat-bottomed iron steamboats on the Seine. He had an experimental paddle vessel built in England, navigated her across the Channel, and steamed up the Seine, to the intense wonderment of the Parisians. Having no business capacity and being hampered by local objections to English-built ships, his capital soon began to dwindle, his French associates being quite willing to let him bear the full expenses of his experiments.

He decided, therefore, that there was really no place like home, and in 1820 they all set off for Calais in the three-decker. Adopting the same procedure as before, they crossed to Dover, coach and all, and drove up to London, where they were mistaken for a batch of Italian witnesses come to impugn the chastity of Queen Caroline, and being followed by a threatening crowd, eventually took refuge in Hachett's Hotel, Piccadilly.

Napier took Bury Hall, 'a pretty villa' in Hampshire, where they all lived for a few weeks; but in the summer he was off to Paris again about the steamboats, which now looked like being successful; and in the autumn the whole family once more was established in the Rue Pigalle.

Then everything went wrong: his little son, born in 1816, died suddenly; and gradually it became apparent that the steamboats scheme would never succeed and that he had lost almost all his capital. They moved out to St. Cloud, and then to Havre, and in 1827 returned to England, nearly penniless, and took a tiny cottage at Rowland's Castle, near Havant. 'With the smiles of fortune were at the same time withdrawn those of the world. The neighbouring gentry did not even condescend to call on the poor half-pay naval officer, whom, as they drove past with their liveried retainers, they might now often behold working in his garden without a coat.'

He made frequent applications to the Admiralty for employment, and in 1829 was distinctly lucky to be given the frigate *Galatea*. His recent experiments with steam made him very anxious to establish some form of mechanical power for the Navy, independent of the wind, and he obtained Admiralty permission to make experiments with the *Galatea*. He fitted her with paddles which could be shipped or unshipped as the occasion required, and which were driven by a series of winches disposed along both sides of the main deck and worked entirely by hand. It took the efforts of two-thirds of the crew to give this form of propulsion its full effect, and, as a result of their exhilarating exercise, a speed of three knots was easily achieved in dead calm. This method compared favourably with the speed obtained by towing with boats, or using huge sweeps;

and, in the days when it often took a week to get in or out of harbour, was not to be despised. Of course, the future lay with engines driven by steam; but, in the days when these were looked upon as unreliable, highly dangerous and destructive of the art of seamanship, Napier's scheme at least had the merit of paving the way.

He also kept his men busy by organising sham attacks on Southsea Castle and landings on the beach, his operations at times even extending as far as Portsdown Hill. All this time the *Galatea* was stationed off Portsmouth, and Napier was thus able to have his family to live on board, a proceeding which soon was to become considered as highly irregular. 'He took much pleasure in displaying his good taste in handsomely fitting out their cabins and doing everything in his power to make them comfortable.' Naturally the social life of the ship benefited considerably.

III

After a cruise to the West Indies, he was given a short leave, and was then 'despatched to Lisbon, on the delicate and important mission of demanding satisfaction from Dom Miguel's Government, together with the restitution of certain British merchant vessels that had been seized by order of the usurper of the throne of Portugal.'

The public affairs of that unfortunate country were in their usual condition of sordid chaos—the wicked uncle, the Regent Dom Miguel, having dispossessed his innocent niece, Donna Maria, and seized her throne. In the course of this truculent manœuvre, which involved annulling the constitution and giving way 'to the most insane excesses of arbitrary power,'[1] he had incidentally

[1] Sir Richard Lodge: *History of Modern Europe*.

incommoded some British merchants. Napier 'exhibited such self-command and dexterity' that he entirely achieved his object.

Having made another trip to the West Indies, he was again ordered to protect British interests abroad, just at the moment when he hoped to have a share in the Admiralty's new experiments with steam. This time he was sent to Terceira in the Azores, where the partisans of Donna Maria, 'the little Queen,' had succeeded in establishing themselves. From Terceira they attempted, under the leadership of Count Villa Flor, to get control of the other islands, and Napier's duty was to anticipate their movements, not a very difficult task, and to be on the spot to protect British lives and property.

He was again entirely successful, and returned to England in the summer of 1831, when the *Galatea* was ordered to join Admiral Codrington's Experimental Squadron in the Channel. Here he was able to give further demonstrations of the efficacy of man-propelled paddles, and thereby aroused the interest of the Duke of Wellington, who asked him to dinner. 'I opened out with him, as I do everywhere, and I think he was much pleased; he shook hands twice when I came away.'

Some miscellaneous service in home waters followed until January, 1832, when the *Galatea* was finally paid off, and Napier again went on half-pay and lived with his family at Purbrook Lodge, near Portsmouth. But 'one horse, a cow, a small field and a garden gave scarcely sufficient scope for his activities,' even when he added to them the task of 'repairing the parish road leading past his house.' So he decided to stand for Portsmouth as an independent Liberal at the next election, the first after the Reform Bill. His election address was

'frank and sailor-like,' and confined itself almost entirely to service questions of interest to the borough. His canvassing was conducted with energy and his speeches were delivered with vigour and aplomb; but there were strong influences against him, and in the end the interests of Messrs. Francis Baring[1] and Bonham Carter prevailed.

A further spell of inactivity was fortunately averted by a new crisis in the affairs of Portugal. King Pedro, father of the little Queen, who had already abandoned the throne of Portugal, preferring that of Brazil, was also forced to abdicate from his throne at Rio de Janeiro. He, therefore, decided to assist the cause of his daughter, and attempt to drive Dom Miguel out of Portugal. Having landed at Oporto with a great flourish, he allowed himself to be blockaded by sea and land, and his enterprise temporarily came to a stop.

Napier, who was watching these events closely and was in correspondence with the leaders of the Queen's party, whom he had previously met at the Azores, urged them 'to bring the contest to a close by a dash at Lisbon.'

The cause of the 'little Queen' had a double attraction for him. Not only was it a romantic and chivalrous one, but it was also a constitutional one, the leaders of her party having pledged themselves to various liberal reforms.

When, therefore, the Marquis Palmella came to London in September, 1832, and failed to obtain any assistance for the Queen's party from the British Government, he naturally lent a willing ear to Napier's suggestions, and finally the Queen's representative in London was authorised to offer Napier the command of the Portuguese fleet. Napier, of course, was only too eager to accept and play the part of Cochrane in Europe

[1] Afterwards Lord Northbrook.

against the Holy Alliance, with a dash of Byronic romanticism thrown in. The only objection to the plan was that the Portuguese fleet, or at least the Queen's section of it, was already commanded by a British officer, Admiral Sartorius, one of Napier's oldest friends. He was, however, only too willing to resign, being thoroughly disgusted with the treatment he had received. Violent intrigues had prevented him from carrying out any definite operations, and a party of men had actually been sent to arrest him, whom he himself had arrested instead.

Then followed some difficulty about the Foreign Enlistment Act, which was temporarily overcome by Napier assuming the name of Carlos de Ponza, in memory of his Mediterranean exploit.

He was now ready to start, having persuaded four other British officers to join him, one being his second stepson, Lieutenant Charles George Elers, R.N., who, having assumed the name of Napier for family reasons, now called himself 'Charley,' in order to deceive the Admiralty. The Queen's agents having judiciously allowed the news of Napier's appointment 'to leak out,' some London capitalists advanced them £6,000 in cash. Napier and his officers were to receive six months' pay in advance, and his life was to be insured for £10,000. 'I buy no clothes,' he wrote before starting, 'only a pair of epaulettes and a pair of gold lace pantaloons, and put anchor buttons on my coat.'

He sailed from Spithead on 27th May, 1833, in the steamer *City of Waterford*, accompanied by the Marquis Palmella, and at once assumed the title of admiral. The crew were mostly British seamen, and proved difficult to handle, being full of complaints at bad treatment by the Portuguese. Napier, however, managed to awe

them by a combination of threats and promises, though further trouble occurred off Falmouth, when several tried to desert in a boat and were drowned. He was eventually joined by four other steamers, carrying two battalions of foot, one recruited in England and the other in Belgium. Four hundred Poles, who were due to join the expedition at Vigo, failed to materialise, only twelve arriving; but Napier pushed ahead and reached Oporto, where he met Sartorius and Count Villa Flor, now Duke of Terceira.

He was then introduced to Dom Pedro, ex-King of Portugal, ex-Emperor of Brazil and father of the 'little Queen,' who, not having been informed of the suggested attack on Lisbon, received Napier and the Marquis somewhat coldly. Next day Napier, who was suffering agonies from neuralgia in his head, told Dom Pedro that, unless active measures were decided on at once, he would go home. This cleared the air and made Dom Pedro more civil; and Napier hoisted his flag in the *Queen of Portugal* as 'Vice-Admiral, Major-General of the Portuguese Navy and Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet.' Sartorius went home, accompanied by a hundred of the most experienced British seamen, who refused to serve a day longer; and Napier was left with three frigates, a schooner and a brig and his five steamboats, and was forced to man some of his ships almost entirely with Portuguese! All the crews by this time were semi-mutinous, having had no pay for weeks and being almost devoid of clothes; but he put to sea at once, leaving Oporto closely besieged, and the harbour entrance commanded by enemy batteries. Passing the mouth of the Tagus, he landed the Duke of Terceira with some troops near the mouth of the Guadiana in the extreme south-east of Portugal, and then seized Faro and Lagos and proclaimed Donna

Maria Queen. 'I like much better being an admiral than captain,' he wrote to his wife. 'I interfere very little, though sometimes I break out; but I hope to correct that.'

Steering north again, he met the Miguelite navy off Cape St. Vincent on 2nd July. It had just left the Tagus, and consisted of two of the line, two fifties, three corvettes, and two brigs. The rival fleets remained in sight of each other till the fifth, when a slight breeze enabled Napier to force an action. It had been a dead calm just before, and he had ordered the steamboats to take his sailing-ships in tow, but their captain refused to do so unless they were paid £2,000 per ship. 'Officers and seamen came forward with all the money they possessed, to bribe the cowards to act,'[1] but they could not collect enough.

The action began by the Miguelites opening fire at a range of four hundred yards, but without securing many direct hits. 'Fortunately most of these missiles bounded over our hulls, though making, in their sportive upward course, sad havoc among our masts and rigging.' Napier's ships replied to the enemy's ships of the line in great style, and, luffing up, raked their adversaries' sterns and then closed. Napier himself and every man on deck except the helmsman boarded their opponent and quickly captured her. Charles Elers Napier was wounded in fifteen places, and Napier himself was struck on the chest by an iron bar. 'I gave one fellow a cut over the head,' he wrote to his wife, 'and I fancy I must have tolerably well handled others, as my sword was very much stained with blood. I think the prize money will be something handsome. You must give a dance on the green and think of me.'

Both Miguelite ships of the line and both fifties were

[1] Napier's *War in Portugal*.

captured, only the corvettes and brigs escaping. This was an amazing feat, for, quite apart from the great disparity in strength and numbers, the boarding of ships of the line by low-hulled frigates was never attempted in regular naval warfare.

Napier was promoted by Dom Pedro to be full admiral in the Portuguese navy and given the title of Viscount Cape St. Vincent. He took his ships and prizes into Lagos to refit and re-man, the last task being rendered comparatively easy owing to most of the Miguelite officers and men joining the Queen's service. At Lagos, he met the Duke of Terceira, who was carrying all before him in the south, most of Dom Miguel's troops having laid down their arms when attacked and changed sides *en masse*. Some hearty fraternisation followed, with no little drunkenness, and suddenly cholera broke out in the fleet in a most virulent form. Napier at once put to sea and steered west, and, as a result of the change of temperature and atmosphere, the disease stopped, after several hundred men had died. Heading north-east again, he entered the Tagus on 25th July, and found the Duke of Terceira had marched north with commendable energy and captured Lisbon the night before.

A British squadron was lying in the harbour, and, on going on board Sir William Parker's flagship, he was received with a guard of honour, a salute and manned yards. This recognition of his Portuguese rank by a senior British officer, and the hearty cheers given him by the British flagship, probably gave him more pleasure than all the honours and praises he received from the Portuguese. It must have been a great moment for him as he drew opposite Lisbon, where the Tagus broadens into a huge lagoon, to see the crowds watching him from on shore, and the crews of the British squadron noting

every detail of the tiny squadron with which he had given such a display of British seamanship in the British cause of constitutional liberty.

The rejoicings on shore were ecstatic and spectacular, the populace being strongly in favour of the constitutionalists' political programme. But, with typical Latin disregard for prudence, they chose to assume that Dom Miguel was completely beaten and that the civil war was over. On the contrary, the Miguelites had just enlisted the services of Maréchal Bourmont, a French adventurer, and were pressing the siege of Oporto, while they threatened at any moment to march south on Lisbon.

Napier continually urged on Dom Pedro the necessity of putting Lisbon in a thorough state of defence; but, finding his advice disregarded, he settled down to reorganise the navy in his new capacity of Major-General of the Arsenal. 'I am delighted with my occupation,' he wrote to his wife, 'and have no one to control me, either in the fleet or the dockyard. I have got into an excellent house and have also a box at the opera.'

But his complacency did not last long, for he soon found that, though the dockyard buildings were quite excellent, the personnel consisted almost entirely of 'the lame, the blind and the lazy.'[1] 'There is a very nice dockyard here,' he told Admiral Dundas, 'but nothing in it! I have, however, got to work, and will soon put it to rights, and shall get up a small navy, ready to leather the Spaniards, should they be saucy.' The possibility of Spanish intervention was an additional danger, for in that unhappy country a civil war had just begun, similar to the one in Portugal, the leading figures being the liberal-constitutional infant Queen, Isabella, and the absolutist Don Carlos.

[1] Napier's *War in Portugal*.

So

But for the moment the Portuguese constitutionalists had enough to occupy them in resisting the Miguelites, who, as Napier predicted, marched south and attacked Lisbon at the beginning of September. Napier had already decided against 'poking my head where I have no business,' and, having stationed his ships at the mouth of the Tagus, went ashore to see the fun.

Bourmont, like all intending captors of Lisbon, stationed his troops on the surrounding hills, but was unable to make much progress, despite the inertia of the defenders. He soon resigned, and was succeeded by General Macdowell, a Peninsula veteran, who, finding his army suffering from sickness, desertion, and an inclination to scour the country for loot, raised the siege in October, and retired on Santarem.

Captain Elliot, R.N., had also come out to Portugal to command Dom Miguel's fleet; but, as it had ceased to exist since the battle of Cape St. Vincent, he had to be content with the office of 'Naval Adviser to the Usurper.'

Donna Maria arrived by sea from England during the siege and was installed at Lisbon as Queen, and was followed a few days afterwards by Mrs. Napier.

Now that the Miguelites were repulsed, Napier imagined that he would be able to get on with reorganising the navy; but he quickly found himself faced by every kind of obstacle. Not only were the dockyard workmen and officials corrupt and incompetent, but the British section of the ships' crews were in constant eruption, demanding alternately more pay or instant repatriation. Besides this, Dom Pedro and the Ministry of Marine continually interfered with his arrangements, while the 'Director of Countability' refused to grant the necessary increases of pay to officers for whom Napier had obtained promotion. But this proved to be a mild, temporary shift, for a little

later the 'Countability' ceased payment altogether and the whole personnel of the navy were left destitute. The bad state of affairs in the dockyard was, of course, due to the same cause, the wages of the artificers and shipwrights being hopelessly in arrears, so that only half-wits and the unemployable were attracted to the profession.

Naturally, therefore, they did as little work as possible, and kept special look-outs posted to give warning of Napier's approach. On the supply side, his position was equally difficult, since the contractors for naval stores refused to offer tenders, knowing that they would never be paid. The Government of Portugal was, as usual, bankrupt, and consequently the efficiency and discipline of its public service were seriously impaired. The dilemma is one familiar to all students of public finance.

Foire, the Minister of Marine, resigned; but his successor, Majorchi, an astronomer, proved even worse. 'He thought more of the stars than either ships or colonies; in addition to which he was indolent and never thoroughly awake.'

Napier, in desperation, decided to pull the navy together by attacking the Miguelite forts on the coast. He had already reinforced Lagos during the siege of Lisbon, and he now conducted some clever operations in Setuval Bay; but was prevented from exploiting them further by the opposition of Dom Pedro and also by a severe illness. In the spring of 1834, however, he began again, and went to Setuval, but was recalled by Dom Pedro, on which he suddenly sailed north, landed at the mouth of the Minho on the frontier, marched inland through Spanish territory, captured Caminha, Viana and Valença and raised the siege of Oporto, all in less than a fortnight. It is true that he met with little resistance, but the whole campaign was conducted with amazing

brilliance and bluff, the enemy garrisons in each case being offered the alternatives of surrender or massacre.

Napier returned to Lisbon in triumph, having cleared the Miguelites out of all their northern strongholds. Dom Pedro was infuriated at his conduct in undertaking an entirely unauthorised campaign; but its success was so sweeping that Napier was raised to the dignity of a Count, and his Countess was invested with the Order of Isabella.

The only towns now left to Dom Miguel were those in the Mondego Valley in the centre of the country, and Santarem on the Tagus, where he had his headquarters. In May, therefore, Napier was off again, this time with permission, and, after considerable difficulty, succeeded in getting through the surf and landing at Figueras and capturing the town. He then marched inland and captured Ourem, while the Duke of Terceira marched north from Lisbon and drove Dom Miguel out of Santarem. 'I am now quite a "general,"' Napier wrote, 'having under my command the English marines and sailors, the Portuguese marines, the Scotch regiment, the Alcobaçaeni, fifty cavalry, and two guns, about 1,500 men in all; and I assure you I get on very well, and everybody is delighted to be with me.'

The Powers now intervened and acknowledged Donna Maria as the *de jure* Queen of Portugal, and arranged for Dom Miguel to abandon all his claims and to leave the country. Realising the absolute impossibility of putting the Portuguese navy on a proper footing, now that all danger to the Queen's Government was removed, Napier came home for a few weeks' leave in June, and, on returning to Lisbon, resigned his command and severed all connection with the Portuguese Government.

IV

When Napier finally left Portugal, in November 1834, he found that his recent activities had become a subject of international interest. The vast majority of the British public were not only immensely impressed with the purely technical excellence of his operations by sea and land, conducted with such inadequate resources, but were enthusiastic over the share he had taken as a British officer in establishing parliamentary and constitutional government in Europe. His achievement was rightly considered to have been that of a crusader rather than of a condottiere.

On the other hand, there was a strong body of Tory feeling which, while it admired his dash and ability, thought there was little to choose between the various corrupt and inefficient parties in Portugal, and feared lest undue political capital should be made out of what had occurred.

Moreover, Napier's position in the British Navy had already become the subject of a rather unpleasant political agitation. When he first went to Portugal, his name was struck off the Navy List, as an ordinary matter of routine, since he had left England and enlisted in a foreign navy without leave. But the Admiralty had taken the additional step of depriving him of his Greenwich 'outpension,' which he had received in recognition of his wounds and services twenty years before; and had, moreover, replied to his protest in a letter addressed to 'Charles Napier, Esq.' at the time when he was an Admiral, Major-General and Viscount of Portugal.

Both these acts could be easily defended, the first on the grounds that if he entered foreign service he could no longer expect to receive the pension, and the second

on the grounds that the Queen's Government having not yet been officially recognised, its titles and commissions had no status.

Napier's friends in England, however, were not slow in taking up these points against the Government, which was by no means ultra-Tory, and an influential meeting was held at the London Tavern, under the Chairmanship of the Duke of Sussex, at which a motion was unanimously carried demanding Napier's reinstatement in his rank in the Navy. Finding himself, therefore, already a political figure, he set about canvassing Portsmouth again as soon as he returned home, and announced himself as 'a decided reformer of abuses in Church and State; no pluralities, no non-residence; the working clergy to be paid more, the higher less; no sinecures in Army or Navy; shorter Parliaments, three or four years; and a strong inclination for vote by ballot. A property tax in preference to assessed taxes—don't like the malt tax—an enemy to impressment—cannot give up flogging in the Navy, but would ameliorate the conditions of the service, which would lead to it—cannot form an opinion of its necessity in the Army. . . . I am a systematic opposer of any Government, and will support them when right.'

Judged by modern standards, it was a cautious, independent programme, and modest, too, except in its last sentence; but in 1834 it was extreme enough for him to be called a violent Radical, if not worse. But, in any case, Messrs. Baring and Carter were still all-powerful at Portsmouth, and his candidature again failed.

Meanwhile, strong representations were made to the King on his behalf, with the result that a few months after his return to England he was reinstated in his rank as captain in the Navy, on the half-pay list. He spent the next two years in attempting to get his Greenwich

good service pension restored, promoting the service interests of his step-children, and trying to get his claims on the Portuguese Government settled, together with those of the other British officers who had served under him.

On his return home he had bought a small estate near Catherington in Hampshire, called 'Quallett's Grove,' which he renamed Merchistoun. Here he lived quite quietly, alternately absorbed in farming and correspondence. He also found time to write a history of the Civil War in Portugal, which was published in 1836, together with many papers on the manning of the Navy and the evils of the old system of impressment.

In 1837, being again weary of realising his oft-repeated desire to live quietly for the rest of his life, he stood as Liberal candidate for Greenwich, against Mr. Wolverly Attwood, the Chairman of the General Steam Navigation Company. The contest was rendered specially breezy by the appearance of a crowd of seamen in the company's service, who terrorised the hustings and refused Napier a hearing. Next day, however, he produced a strong party of seamen from the *Medea* frigate and things were more even, but, having little organisation behind his candidature, he was fairly comfortably defeated.

He spent the autumn in Lisbon, trying to get his claims attended to by personal application; he was well received, but found the country still unsettled and the financial department as unwilling to satisfy claimants as before, especially foreigners.

A new good-service pension was awarded him in 1838, but the list of his services as published in the Navy Estimates appeared to him to be so misleading and inadequate that his political friends made a protest about it in the House. In the ensuing debate his services were

most flatteringly acknowledged by the Government, but the printed notice of them was not altered. He was so full of energy, self-confidence and grievances that he found it impossible to keep quiet for more than a few weeks at a time, and was continually posting up to Town to interview Lord Palmerston, or to explain his plans for the good of the nation to the sympathetic Duke of Sussex. When not in Town he bombarded the Government and the Press with written advice on the conduct of naval affairs, concentrating chiefly on the necessity of a proper system of manning the Navy combined with a substantial rise in pay; and in denouncing in sensible but exaggerated tones the unscrupulous intentions of France and Russia.

Growing weary at length of his rôle of unpaid and unappointed public mentor, he applied to the Admiralty for a ship, and on 1st January, 1839, commissioned the *Powerful*, a promising two-decker of 84 guns, only thirteen years old. She was ordered to join the Mediterranean Fleet under Admiral Sir Robert Stopford, and during the voyage out she became a model of discipline and efficiency.

For some years the Powers had been considerably worried by the pretensions of Mehemet Ali, the Pasha of Egypt, who, although a vassal of the Sultan of Turkey, had taken possession of Crete and Syria. At this stage the Sultan died, leaving an infant son, whose army, in attempting to eject Mehemet Ali from Syria, was completely defeated. Meanwhile Achmed Fevzy carried the main Turkish fleet to Alexandria and handed it over to Mehemet Ali, whose ambitions now extended to the seizure of the Sultanate.

Great Britain, France and Russia, the most interested Powers, had so far been engaged in supporting and

checking each side in turn, and in watching each other with the utmost suspicion. In view, however, of Mehemet Ali's exceptionally aggressive designs, Great Britain at once decided to cover the Dardanelles and protect Constantinople, in which policy she was fully supported by Russia and somewhat half-heartedly by France.

When Napier joined Stopford in August 1839, the British and French fleets were already concentrated in the neighbourhood of the Dardanelles, and there was also an Austrian squadron stationed at Smyrna. But, as nothing of importance transpired, the British fleet was moved to Vourla Bay, near Smyrna. This by no means suited Napier, who kept pointing out in private letters to Lord Palmerston that Russia was using the existing situation to gain control over Turkey, as she had done a few years previously; and that the British and French fleets ought to occupy Constantinople and so forestall her. Undoubtedly he was correct in emphasising Russia's desire to control Turkey by protecting her from Mehemet Ali, whom he considered a much abused person.

The British fleet had little to do for the time being but cruise off the coast of Asia Minor and await the result of a diplomatic conference, at which Great Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia agreed to support Turkey in a demand for the restoration of Syria and Crete.

While they waited for Mehemet Ali's reply, Napier was ordered to hoist a broad pendant and take command as commodore of a small squadron which was to anchor at Beyrout, where one of Mehemet Ali's generals was stationed at the head of 15,000 men. Just as the time-limit for Mehemet Ali's reply to the joint ultimatum was about to expire, Stopford arrived at Beyrout to take

over the command, much to Napier's disgust. But he was not to be so easily deprived of his desire for personal control. It had been decided to make a landing north of the town and form a fortified camp with 1,500 marines and 6,000 Turkish troops, assisted by a small party of British gunners and engineers. Brigadier-General Sir Charles Smith, the officer detailed to command this force ashore, was suddenly taken ill, and Napier persuaded Stopford to ignore the claims of the next senior soldier, a lieutenant-colonel of marines, and to allow him to command the whole force instead.

They landed on 9th September, Napier being in great form, 'working, bellowing and running about everywhere; one moment rapping a lazy fellow over the head with a big stick, and the next working away himself.' He lost no time in consolidating his position ashore and in issuing an invitation to the local tribesmen to support the British and Turks against the Egyptians. They soon came in to negotiate, and Napier was 'receiving and entertaining mountain Princes and Turkish Pashas, Emirs and Sheikhs, Maronites and Druses, having always plenty to do, and planning meanwhile a little campaign of his own!'

'He will, I think, make a second Sir Sidney Smith, if opportunity offers,' recorded one of his officers in a daily journal. Stopford meanwhile bombarded Beyrout, the ultimatum having expired, and took care to give Napier a free hand.

Finding that Ibrahim Pasha, Mehemet Ali's son, had concentrated his whole army not far off, but was making no attempt to attack the Anglo-Turkish camp, Napier decided to forestall him by seizing the initiative himself. He had already distributed thousands of arms to the tribesmen, and he now wrote personally to Lord Minto,

the First Lord, asking for more marines, 'and if Sir Charles Smith does not return, I trust an Engineer officer of lower rank may be sent out, who will not interfere with me. I have begun this business successfully, and I feel myself quite equal to go on with it; for it is nothing new to me.'

While waiting for the reinforcements, he went off to sea to carry out an attack on Sidon with a detached squadron, having represented to Stopford that to let a more junior officer undertake it would be very 'hard'; 'as yet I have had nothing but fag, and it is natural I should wish to reap the fruits I have been fagging for.' Stopford gave way, and in forty-eight hours Napier rejoined him, having landed and stormed Sidon with a mixed force of marines, Austrians and Turks.

On his return, he found Stopford somewhat confused by conflicting advice and intelligence reports, but anxious to capture Beyrout as quickly as possible. Napier supported this plan, especially as there were rumours of Smith being in better health and likely to return and take command of the land forces in his place. Stopford therefore embarked the marines, as they were unable to act with the light-footed Turks owing to their heavy equipment, and decided to use them for a landing at Beyrout, while Napier was to march inland with the Turks and attack Beyrout from the rear.

On 8th October Napier's advanced guard left the camp under General Jochmas, his chief-of-staff. This officer was a Hamburger, who 'had actively assisted in the war of liberation in Greece, subsequently held a high position in the Spanish Legion, and was promoted to the rank of general officer in that country, and had lately proffered his services to the Sultan.' Next day Napier started with the main body, having strong,

irregular forces of tribesmen disposed ahead and on his flanks. On seeing the enemy's outposts on the hills above, Stopford had one of his periodic fits of nervousness, and tried to persuade Napier to retreat, but without avail, and soon his second-in-command had disappeared into the mountains.

Napier had hardly reached the foothills of the Lebanon Mountains when he found himself opposed in force, and decided to wait for the assistance of his local irregular allies. Next day, 10th October, he discovered that he was opposed not merely by troops protecting the rear of Beyrout, or a part of its garrison retiring, but by the main body of the Egyptian army, commanded by Ibrahim Pasha in person. 'I knew little of the troops I commanded,' he wrote; 'many of them were Albanians; and both parties had been endeavouring to persuade each other to come over. Our friends advised them to bring over Ibrahim (whom I had seen sitting, the day before, under a green flag in the second position, and saluted him); and the enemy, on the other hand, recommended that the old Commodore should be brought over to them. All this was distinctly heard at the outposts.'

At this critical moment orders arrived from Stopford to say that General Smith had joined the fleet with direct authority from the Sultan of Turkey to command the Turkish armies in Syria, and that Napier must at once retire and hand over the command. Very properly disregarding such inopportune orders, which would have had the worst possible effect on the morale of his men, Napier ordered the Turks to attack the main Egyptian position while the mountain irregulars turned their flank. The slopes ahead were covered with rocks and terraced with stone walls, behind which the Turks,

when deployed, were inclined to take cover instead of advancing. Napier, having 'at a glance perceived that nothing but a stroke of the boldest venture could save him from utter defeat,' 'threw himself amongst the Turks, whom he not only '—as he expressed it—' stirred up with his stick,' but actually tried to shoot with a musket, which, however, missed fire. Eventually the Egyptians retired from their first position, but only to occupy a stronger and rockier one higher up the mountain.

The Turks, thinking they had done enough for one day, again took cover and waited, till Napier came up and pelted them with stones, when they moved on again. Placing himself at their head, accompanied by General Jochmas and his staff, they all charged forward, and captured the Egyptian main position in less than half an hour. Ibrahim Pasha was totally defeated, and his general, Souleyman Pasha, evacuated Beyrout the same day, so that Stopford's marines were able to occupy it without resistance. Napier then withdrew his force to the coast, handed over the command to General Smith, and retired on board the *Powerful*. The fact that Stopford was then in his seventy-third year easily accounted for the wise but unusual latitude of action which he allowed his ambitious second-in-command.

The British Cabinet now ordered Stopford to attack Acre, the only important place left to Mehemet Ali's forces on the coast. The army ashore was therefore embarked on board the fleet and a few transports, and sailed south accompanied by some Austrian and Turkish frigates. They hoped to be able to make a breach in the walls of Acre, by concentrated fire at close range, through which the marines and Turks might advance; but, finding the water close in too shallow, 'arrangements were then made for an awful bombardment.' Luckily

the garrison expected the ships to anchor further out still, and raised their gun platforms to such an extent that they could not bring fire to bear sufficiently low. Consequently, when the attack opened on 3rd November, the garrison were unable to develop their full fire power, and, although they damaged the allied ships considerably, they were heavily punished in reply, till at the end of two hours their central magazine blew up, and their resistance was at an end.

Napier led the attack in the *Powerful*, and was ordered by Stopford to approach from the south and anchor opposite the angle made by the southern and western defences. The other ships were then to pass him in succession to the north and anchor opposite the western batteries. But, instead, Napier chose to approach from the north, and to anchor considerably further to the north than he had been ordered, thus crowding and confusing the ships astern of him. Stopford, who had shifted his flag to the *Phœnix* steamer in order to get a better view of the action, was very angry, and admonished Napier publicly, which resulted in Napier asking for a court-martial.

But Stopford was too weary and too wily to be made a party to a naval scandal, and sent Napier a soothing note, stating that a difference of opinion did not constitute a censure, to which Napier agreed, but added with characteristic truculence, ' I placed my ship to the best of my judgment—I could do no more.'

Mehemet Ali's hold on Syria being now completely broken, Napier was sent by Stopford to command the squadron blockading Alexandria. He was also shown a copy of a letter sent by Lord Palmerston to Lord Ponsonby, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, which laid down the terms which Great Britain, Turkey,

Austria, Prussia and Russia might be expected to make with Mehemet Ali. These were, in general, that if Mehemet Ali would withdraw his troops from Syria and Crete, and restore the Turkish fleet to the Sultan, the powers would recognise him as hereditary Pasha of Egypt.

Palmerston's letter added that Stopford as well as the Ambassador should do everything in their power to make the nature of these terms known in Egypt, by which Napier clearly divined that the Powers had no intention of deposing Mehemet Ali, and were anxious to come to an arrangement with him before the French could intervene on his behalf and make further trouble. Here was a chance for him to play a big part in the negotiations, for, by being stationed off Alexandria, he would have an excellent opportunity of direct access to the Pasha. Accordingly on 22nd November, the day after the *Powerful* arrived off the town, he sent Captain Maunsell ashore under a flag of truce, with a letter to Boghos Bey, Mehemet Ali's principal Minister. In this letter he urged on the Pasha the desirability of accepting the proposals suggested by the Sultan and his allies; and received a reply in which Boghos Bey explained that his master was delighted with the terms and most anxious to accept them. Clearly Napier's next move should have been to report the result of his mission to Stopford, Lord Ponsonby and the home Government; but he was so anxious to play the part of Sir Sidney Smith over again, and settle the affair himself, that he made no attempt to do anything of the kind. Instead, he at once went ashore and interviewed Mehemet Ali in person, and they 'smoked away for a considerable time as if we had been the best friends in the world.' The Pasha very naturally wanted to know what were

Napier's credentials, to which he could only reply: 'The double-shotted guns of the *Powerful*, with the squadron under his command to back him, his honour as an Englishman, and the knowledge he had of the desire of the four great Powers for peace.' Mehemet Ali was delighted with this unconventional assumption of plenary powers, and at once agreed to treat, dismissing from his presence the French Consul, who tried to interfere and make a scene. On 27th November, therefore, less than a week after the date of Napier's arrival on the coast, he signed the Convention of Alexandria with Boghos Bey.

It provided for the evacuation of Mehemet Ali's army from Syria, with the assistance of the British fleet, and recognised his position as hereditary ruler of Egypt. 'You have seen me a Lord High Admiral, a Commodore, and a General,' he wrote to his wife; 'I have now turned a Negotiator, and have made peace with Mehemet Ali. Heaven knows whether the Government will approve or not of what I have done; but I know I am right. . . . The French have done all they could to prevent Mehemet Ali agreeing to my terms, but I beat them all. . . . I shall be either hanged by the Government or made a Bishop.'

But in reality he knew that he was on fairly firm ground, at least firmer than that of Sidney Smith, whose conduct he freely quoted as a precedent. For, whereas Smith acted in direct opposition to the declared policy of his Government, Napier had merely stolen a march on the diplomatic corps and speeded up the whole business by several weeks. It is true that, unlike Smith, he had never had a vestige of excuse for assuming plenary powers, and that his commander-in-chief was only two days' distant by sea; but, on the other hand, he had the

inestimable advantage of being able to give complete effect to what all the interested parties, except the French, desired.

Nevertheless, the storm of abuse came down pretty heavily. Stopford, General Smith and Lord Ponsonby all wrote furious letters repudiating the Convention on behalf of the Navy, the Foreign Office and the Turkish army; while the diplomats of the Powers concerned held up their hands in horror at such impertinent efficiency.

'They meant to sit down before the Pasha, like a strong place in the Low Countries, to work upon him by elaborate approaches,' wrote Lord Napier,[1] commenting on the attitude of the diplomatists at Vienna, 'and when you scaled his defences at once, they grieved that all their well-laid plans should go for naught.'

Two things, however, were in Napier's favour: firstly, the British Government had the good sense to show their approval of his conduct by using the Convention as the basis of a formal treaty, which was signed next year between all the interested Powers, including France. Secondly, the news of his coup did not reach London till just after a whole stream of official congratulations, thanks and awards had been sent him on his recent conduct at Beyrout and Sidon. These included his promotion to a Knighthood of the Bath, and to the rank of Commodore, First Class. It was rather difficult, therefore, for the Government suddenly to change its tune, and indeed it made no effort to do so.

'After the great and important services which you have performed for us in Syria,' wrote Palmerston, 'it would require a very strong case indeed to create in us dissatisfaction towards you; and certainly no such feeling was excited here by your Convention with Mehemet Ali;

[1] Francis, ninth Lord Napier.

on the contrary, we were glad you had taken the step, because it had produced an act of submission on the part of Mehemet Ali, which was, at all events, something gained.'[1]

In January 1841, therefore, Napier proceeded to Cairo to ratify his own Convention; and Turkey, Austria, Russia and Prussia, seeing that he had the full support of his Government and was not going to be made a scapegoat, hastened to bestow on him orders and decorations, which he justifiably referred to as 'all humbug!'

In March he came home on leave for a month, presenting a remarkable and thoroughly unsailorlike appearance: 'Stoops from a wound in his neck, walks lame from another in his leg, turns out one of his feet, and has a most slouching, slovenly gait, a large round face, with black bushy eyebrows, a double chin, scraggy, grey, uncurled whiskers and thin hair; wears a superfluity of shirt collar, and a small neck-handkerchief, always bedaubed with snuff, which he takes in immense quantities, usually has his trousers far too short, and wears the ugliest pair of old shoes he can find; and altogether takes so little pride in his dress, that I believe you might substitute a green or black coat for his uniform one, without his being a bit the wiser.'[2]

V

Napier's arrival at Liverpool was signalised by a great outburst of public rejoicing, which amply compensated for the humility of being kept four days in quarantine.

'I hear there is a good deal of excitement in the town,' he wrote to his wife, 'so that I shall be shown about like a wild beast. I wish it were over, I am getting too old for

[1] Elers Napier: *Life and Correspondence of Sir Charles Napier.*
[2] Williams: *Life and Letters of Sir Charles Napier.*

these fooleries ; but they must be attended to—such is the way of the world. It will be a nine days' wonder, and I shall then be thought no more of, either by the Government or anybody else.'

He and his officers were treated to a civic banquet ' in the amphitheatre, the boxes crowded with ladies.' Manchester, not to be outdone, sent the Mayor to fetch him there for another banquet. The enthusiasm of the north was tremendous, and not unmixed with strong political feeling and a good deal of Free Trade jingoism.

' I am inundated,' he wrote to his wife from Liverpool, ' with letters every day, visits, addresses and the devil knows what besides.'

His reception in London was more decorous, but equally impressive : the Freedom of the City was presented him, and many public dinners and receptions followed. But Napier was right in his estimate of the Government's appreciation of his services, and, after all, what more could he expect, seeing that it was solely Palmerston's liking for personal initiative which saved him from being court-martialled and dismissed the service ? He did, however, receive the solid satisfaction of being asked to stand as candidate for Marylebone, Lord Teignmouth being about to vacate the seat. ' If returned,' he wrote, ' I shall be at the very height of my ambition,' and in this there is no doubt that he spoke the truth, being too much of an iconoclast and reformer to set an exaggerated value on titles of honour.

Unfortunately, however, his leave was nearly up, and a rather too jaunty application for its extension, in order to make enquiries about Marylebone ' before pledging one's self,' met with a refusal to continue him, unemployed, on full pay, ' on the ground of any political views that may be open to him.'

He, therefore, requested to be put on the half-pay list, which was done, and shortly afterwards he was elected for Marylebone as an independent member. In Parliament he was active and precocious. 'I have made my maiden speech,' he wrote to his wife on 25th August, 1841, 'not either so good or so long as I wished, but still it was very well received. I had it all prepared in my mind, but when I got up, I forgot the second part of it, and was, as you may suppose, in a funk, and I passed over to the second sentence, which threw out the best part of it; and the thread gone, I was discouraged, and left out a great part I intended to say; but still it went off very well and I was very much cheered. When I got up, nobody expected it, and they all looked at me so much that it was quite enough to put me out of countenance; however, the ice is broken, and I am glad I had the courage to speak the first night, which few people attempt.'

'What I forgot,' he added in his next letter, 'was telling the Opposition they ought to acquaint the Queen that they had got their majority by bribery and intimidation. . . . Since then, I hear so many ridiculous speeches, so little to the purpose, that I shall soon acquire confidence. I shall, however, take care never to speak on what I do not thoroughly understand.'[1]

In general he confined himself entirely to naval affairs, being a strong and sensible advocate of a better policy of construction and of improving the position of the personnel, especially that of the marines and the medical branch.

He was not averse, however, to an occasional excursion into other fields of Government business, as witnessed by his letter to Peel on the subject of increasing the revenue

[1] Elers Napier: *Life and Correspondence of Sir Charles Napier.*

produced by the Post. 'I propose to stamp the coarsest paper, that can be written upon, with a penny stamp; on a better sort of paper I would apply a twopenny stamp, and so on, till I got to rose-coloured paper, which might perhaps bear a sixpence. This would be a tax upon vanity, and I think productive. No gentleman would write to a lady on whitey-brown, and no lady would soil her delicate fingers by touching it; nor do I believe tradespeople would use it to their customers, it would be confined entirely to the poor. I can only see one objection: it would do away with the envelopes.'[1]

In addition to his self-imposed duties in Parliament, he had experimented with new agricultural machinery, and wrote a *History of the War in Syria*. In November 1846 he was promoted to rear-admiral, and next year was given command of the Channel Fleet, which was ordered to the Portuguese coast, 'owing to the disturbed state of the country.' While at Lisbon, Napier requested permission to assume his Portuguese title, which was refused by Palmerston with pleasant jocularity. 'We cannot be parties,' he wrote, 'to denationalising one of the brightest ornaments of the British Navy.' Some ill-intentioned persons at home, however, suggested that Napier was using his influence as commander-in-chief of a British fleet to exert undue personal influence on the affairs of Portugal, and to put pressure on the Government to pay him his pension, which, as usual, was several months in arrears. Although he was able to disprove these insinuations, they left considerable bad feeling behind, which was not improved by Napier's somewhat violent partisanship and self-justification. Shortly afterwards, in 1848, the fleet was brought back and stationed on the Irish coast (nearly every country in Europe was in a 'disturbed'

[1] Elers Napier: *Life and Correspondence of Sir Charles Napier.*

state that year), and was later stationed at Gibraltar to deal with the Riff pirates.

In April 1849 he was ordered to strike his flag, the fleet being then at Spithead. This was a sad blow, as he had hoped to retain the command for three years, and was sure that his supersession was due to malevolent intrigue. Moreover, his second stepson, Captain Charles George Elers Napier, R.N., had been recently wrecked and drowned on the coast of Africa; and this, added to his real and supposed professional grievances, gave a tone of unnecessary bitterness to many of the controversies of his later life.

In his series of papers entitled *The Navy, its Past and Present State*, published in 1851, packed full of sensible suggestions for reform, he attacked the Government with undue violence; while, in demanding the command of the Mediterranean Fleet, as if it were his by rights, he became involved in a public quarrel with Lord John Russell, which was little to his credit.

Nevertheless, he was one of the first men in England to recognise the significance of Russia's new aggression in the Balkans, and at once offered his services, although fifty-six years of age, having been permanently injured by wounds, and having suffered much from his tremendous exertions and exposure during the Syrian campaign.

VI

By the end of 1853, when it became clear that Great Britain and France were likely to be involved in a war against Russia on behalf of the Turks, Sir James Graham, the First Lord, approached Napier on the subject of a command. He had just been promoted to vice-admiral and given an admiral's good service pension; and it

was now suggested that the Admiralty would like to have him 'near at hand and ready for any emergency.'

Some questions and negotiations followed, and in February 1854 he was offered command of the fleet destined for the Baltic. Having pointed out in the meanwhile, somewhat incautiously, the Government's complete lack of preparation for war, and the impossibility of obtaining proper crews at such short notice, he was told that if he was dissatisfied he could easily decline the command. This touched him on the raw, and he at once accepted, thereby putting himself in a very awkward position. The failure of Ministry after Ministry from 1815 onwards to make any adequate provision for a sudden naval emergency has by now become a platitude of history. The fault is not to be laid at the door of any particular person or party: it was entirely due to an overwhelming demand for economy after the Napoleonic wars, and to a complete lack of any considered policy of imperial strategy and defence.

Whigs and Tories, Peelites and Liberals, vied with one another in helping to produce a condition of naval impotence, which was carefully disguised by maintaining in commission a few handsome ships, while the dockyards and arsenals were devoid of stores and ammunition, and there was no certain means of obtaining crews except by impressment. Moreover, for the purpose in hand we were entirely unprovided with shallow-draught frigates and gunboats suitable for operating in the confined waters of the Baltic.

Nevertheless, at an important dinner held on 7th March at the Reform Club, to bid Napier good-bye, the Ministers had the effrontery to declare that their preparations were entirely adequate and would be attended with spectacular success. In reality Napier could only

get to sea by enlisting the dockyard riggers as seamen, the majority of his crews, which were hopelessly short of numbers in any case, being the down and outs of the London slums.

He was, therefore, instructed to complete his crews with Danes, Swedes and Finns, and to be careful of his expenditure of shells for practice purposes, 'as they, like everything else, are on the peace establishment.'

When he finally reached the Baltic in April and joined forces with the French fleet, bringing 10,000 French troops in English transports, the possibilities of the campaign were seen to be strictly limited. The Russians made no attempt whatever to engage the Allies at sea, and remained strictly on the defensive. The Allies advanced up the Baltic, hoping to take Cronstadt, Sveaborg, Reval and Helsingfors, but at every point they were faced by the 'frowning casemates' of heavy armed forts, and narrow shallow channels, blocked by sunken ships and electrically fired mines. Ships of the line could not batter down up-to-date fortresses, and Napier soon found that it was impossible to repeat what had been done at Acre. Only an immense force of gun-boats, which could have overcome the navigational difficulties, would have made these operations practicable.

Eventually Bormasund was captured, and the fleet returned to England at the end of the year with nothing else achieved, to the immense annoyance and disappointment of the public. But in reality its ultimate effect on the war was most important. All the Russian forts had been blockaded, while 'the dread of enterprises never attempted, and never indeed contemplated by the allied powers, forbad the concentration of the Russian legions in the real theatre of war,' the Crimea.

On his arrival in England, Napier was peremptorily

dismissed from his command, without a word of thanks or explanation.

The great hardships of the Baltic climate, and the interminable wrangles he had had with the Admiralty while there, combined to undermine his health and mental vigour, which perhaps had never been quite the same since the death of his stepson. But most of all he was furious and disgusted at the way in which he had been calmly instructed to undertake the most difficult operations, and at the same time denied the means wherewith to carry them out.

He retired to Merchistoun, whence he wrote long tirades to the Admiralty, asking for a parliamentary inquiry into his conduct or else a court-martial. But the Aberdeen Ministry, which already had enough to answer for in the failure of the medical service in the Crimea, was, of course, unwilling to give him an opportunity of justifying his conduct; and Palmerston's Ministry, which immediately succeeded it, also refused to reopen the question.

His letters grew fiercer and fiercer, and at last he was goaded into a rather extraordinary indiscretion. In July 1855 he received a letter from the new First Lord, intimating that he had been recommended to the Queen for the Grand Cross of the Bath. To have accepted such an honour would have been absolutely impossible, especially as the recommendation was carefully shown to have emanated from the Admiralty itself, and was therefore in the nature of a bribe. It could in no sense be interpreted either as an acknowledgment of his services or as a compensation for his recent treatment. But, instead of declining it in formal terms, he addressed a long letter of explanation to the Prince Consort, as Grand Master of the Order. Not only was this an exceptional

course to take, but the letter was worded in a fashion which went far beyond the bounds even of ordinary unofficial correspondence. 'I have served Her Majesty's family with honour and credit for fifty-five years,' he wrote, 'and at the end of my career have been grossly insulted, and false interpretations put upon my despatches by the Admiralty, and been degraded and dismissed because I resented, as became a man of honour, injuries wounding to my character. . . . I have no hesitation in saying, had I followed the insane suggestions of Sir James Graham and his Admiralty, the Allied army would have been made prisoners, and the greater part of Her Majesty's fleet lost. . . . Your Royal Highness is a soldier, and you know what is due to a soldier's honour; and I feel satisfied your Royal Highness will pardon the unusual course I have taken to convey my feelings to Her Majesty.'[1]

Next year Admiral Dundas, a member of the Board of Admiralty which had dismissed Napier, took command in the Baltic and failed in every single object for which his predecessor had been blamed for failing to achieve, despite the fact that the fleet was now well supplied with gunboats.

In October 1855 Napier was elected as member for Southwark, and plunged into a personal campaign against Sir James Graham. All the rights and wrongs of Graham's direction of the Baltic campaign were debated, and even the wretched business of Napier's relations with Stopford was again raked up. The whole affair was treated in an entirely partisan spirit, but in the end he managed to obtain a considerable amount of justification for his conduct, and the reputation of Sir James Graham was considerably impaired; but it is doubtful

[1] Elers Napier: *Life and Correspondence of Sir Charles Napier.*

if the measure of success was worth the mental and physical efforts which it cost him. In any case, it is more than a little regrettable that he did not preserve a dignified silence. When once the controversy had begun, however, it was difficult for him to stop, for his enemies both in and out of Parliament kept up a continuous campaign of misrepresentation against him. It was suggested that his so-called failure in the Baltic was due to premature senility aggravated by drink, while Sir Robert Peel, son of the great statesman, alleged at a public dinner that the Russians, ' from the Grand Duke Constantine to the youngest middy,' were convinced that Cronstadt would have fallen had Napier shown pluck equal to that of his officers and men. Napier at once wrote to the Grand Duke, whom he had visited at St. Petersburg in 1856, after the war, and who warmly denied that any such opinion existed.

When not engaged in Parliamentary work, he spent much time in further farming experiments at Merchistoun, while he took a keen interest in the fate of the tribes in Syria and the activities of Garibaldi. He died on 6th November, 1860, at the age of seventy-five, and was buried in Catherington churchyard.

Unlike his prototype, Sir Sidney Smith, whose lack of convention in dress was the result of deliberate contrivance, Napier paid absolutely no attention to dress at all. Nor were his diplomatic efforts the result of anything but shrewdness and bluff. He was a great fighter and a great seaman, who, inspired by the reforming spirit of the times, tried to make his activities fit in with what he imagined to be the ideal. Unfortunately, he imagined that honesty, vigour and general ability were the principal attributes of a politician, and he was fatally deceived.

In consequence, he was made to suffer all the anguish of a simple soul tricked and thwarted by the public spellbinders; while even his courage, ability and moral character were seriously attacked.

He received the most inadequate rewards for his services; nor was his work in Syria or Portugal fated to be permanent. Nevertheless, he was one of the instruments by whose action Britain became the champion of parliamentary government in Europe.

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Note.—N.R.S. indicates a publication of the Navy Records Society.

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